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JORDAN LUCAS



"My first professional bout was a bit of lead-up to it. For me, it was a lot of people that were in the ring and it was a massive win for me," Lucas said. "When my opponent touched my gloves in the ring, I let the moment get to me. It was like a slap in the face. I took a breath after that and I won by TKO within the first round. I think it's a bit of a relief to win. I would have loved to win it, but I was out of the way, every time I compete, I pumped at it."

Lucas' breakout year as a professional fighter came in 2014. With three wins under his belt, he fought for the ONE Championship. And winning the championship was one of the biggest achievements of his young career.

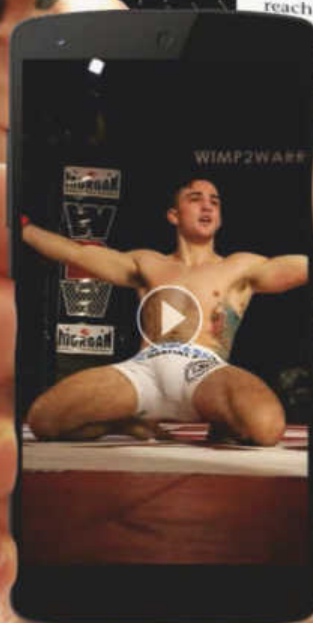
"The BRACE Australian Championship was an eight-man tournament that went on throughout the year," Lucas said. "I fought against Australia's best guys and won the championship fight against Reeka, who a lot of people thought would be my toughest test. Physically and mentally, I had never been so prepared for any fight. It was all I thought about all year long."

to finish the fight in the first round and finally get the Australian BRACE title wrapped around my waist was a massive relief and a proud moment."

When he claimed the BRACE 2014 Bantamweight Championship, Lucas was offered a life-changing contract with ONE Championship. The undefeated fighter had worked hard to get the opportunity and when it finally came, it was everything that he had wished for.

"It was a lot of different emotions in one," Lucas said. "Since I started this sport I had big dreams right away to reach the pinnacle of MMA — to either the UFC or in ONE — the two big promotions in the world. ONE Championship offered me first and I took the opportunity to fight. It was a lot of hard work and that finally paid off. Now I live my worth."

Lucas hoped to make his ONE debut earlier this year, but he suffered a broken arm. Not only did it delay his debut, but it hampered his training. "It was a tough time," Lucas said. "But I was out for this long, usually that's all you need. It goes up must be a good time to rest and



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LOH DOWN

# MMA KEEN IN 2016

**T**o say we have seen some changing of the guard recently would be an understatement.

Firstly, it was amazing to finally sit down cageside in my hometown and witness the fantastic spectacle that only UFC can bring to the fight fans.

After all these years of fighting and begging the government, it was such a pleasure to see such an amazing array of fights on the day, many of which were held by our own local fighters.

I've seen some comments that the show was lagging before the spectacular finale, but I don't know what show they were watching. I thought every single fight on the day was great (okay, maybe there was that one bad one).

Our Aussies did us proud in the Octagon and I am grateful that the fans turned out in record numbers to prove once and for all the pulling power of MMA in this country and to show the Victorian Government that we aren't just a quaint little fashion sport that's going to disappear soon.

I look forward to UFC's return in March and look ahead even further to another possible show at the end of 2016... if we're lucky.

But let us get to the main event on that fateful day in Melbourne...

What can be said that hasn't already been said? I do not exaggerate when I say I was out of my seat and lost for words when I saw Ronda Rousey hit the deck. I'm not one of the post-game experts that knew she would go down, despite her shocking odds. I was expecting the Ronda show, and that was certainly not what went down.

Instead, I witnessed one of, if not the, greatest upsets in MMA history. And I couldn't be more thankful that it all went down right here in our own backyard.

And as if 2015 wasn't already closing it out on an exciting note, Conor McGregor also managed to somehow live up to the gargantuan hype surrounding him, pulling off an almost equally shocking 13-second knockout of seemingly unstoppable reigning UFC champion Jose Aldo.

Though McGregor was not the underdog, I don't think anyone (except maybe himself) saw that end coming. Especially to such a dominant champion who had only felt the sting of loss once, which was more than 10 years prior.

Anyway, it was a hell of a way to end the year, not to mention Luke Rockhold stealing the belt on the same night.

Here's to a great 2016 for MMA — I look forward to even more surprising twists and turns and developments in our crazy world of caged fighting.

And a happy new year to all our readers. Let's make it a great one!

Jarrah Loh  
Editor



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# FIGHT!

AUSTRALIA

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DIEP NGUYEN

## GEARING UP FOR THE 2016 ARNOLD CLASSIC AUSTRALIA

Preparations for the 2016 Arnold Classic Martial Arts Festival are already underway following the success of this year's inaugural Australian instalment.

The 2016 festival will be held over 18, 19 and 20 March, with plans to add even more martial arts styles to the growing championships.

The exciting art of kudo will join the returning martial arts championships of taekwondo, BJJ, AKF karate, kung fu, MMA, kickboxing, WASO/NAS and Kyokushin.

This year saw more than 800 competitors of all ages battle to be crowned the Arnold Classic Champion of their chosen discipline and next year's festival will hopefully see even more sign up to compete.

For more information, tickets and to sign up and compete, visit [www.acamultisport.com.au/](http://www.acamultisport.com.au/)



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## AUSSIE VICTORIOUS AT BELLATOR 146

Aussie **Arlene Blencowe** has emerged victorious from Bellator 146: Kato vs Manhoef. Coming off a loss in August to Marloes Coenen at Bellator 141, Blencowe was eager to return to the winner's circle, but opponent Gabrielle Holloway didn't make it easy.

Much more comfortable on her feet, Blencowe was forced to work on the ground after Holloway scored takedowns in all three rounds, but the Aussie defended well from the bottom.

When it came to Blencowe's comfort zone of striking, she clearly got the better of Holloway in the exchanges on the feet.

In the third round, Blencowe escaped from an arm-triangle choke before making her own submission attempt shortly before the end of the fight.

The judges' scorecard had the fight as very close, with one calling the points 29-28 in Holloway's favour, with the other two calling it 29-28 for Blencowe, moving her record to 7-5.





## SWIPE RIGHT TO FIGHT

Rumblr, a new app described as 'the Tinder for fighting', set the online world crazy only for it to end up being a clever marketing scheme.

Simply put, Rumblr said it was an app for recreational fighters to find, meet and fight other brawl enthusiasts nearby.

Once users found their match, they would organise to "throw down" by organising a time and place to have a fight. Users could find other fights in their local area to view while also scoping out their opponents' fighting history on their About page.

However, soon after its official launch, it was revealed that Rumblr was used to launch a creative consulting agency called von Hughes.

Created by three college drop-outs, the app gained the attention of more than 200 media outlets globally as they quickly planned to turn this story into something positive.

"We understand that some of you were genuinely looking forward to using an app like Rumblr, and we're sorry to disappoint," they said. "However, if you still are truly wishing to release some built-up angst, consider fighting more pressing issues such as gang violence, domestic abuse, and at-risk youth culture."



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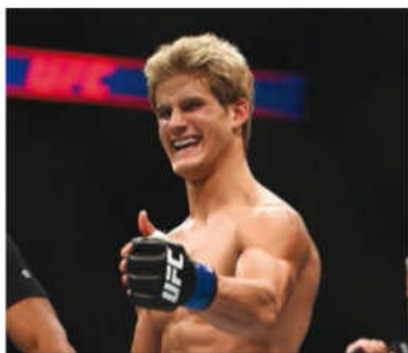
One Championship 'Pride of Lions' saw mixed results for Aussie fighters in Singapore. Sydney-based featherweight **Martin Nguyen** moved his record to 5-1 with his second win for the promotion. Nguyen was awarded the win when the doctor called a stop to the fight late in the first round after opponent Edward Kelly received a bad cut to the forehead.

Fighting out of Lange's MMA in Sydney and making her ONE Championship debut, **Natalie Gonzales-Hills** went down to popular local Angela Lee. Gonzales-Hills made a solid start to the fight with some nice shots in the clinch before taking Lee to the canvas. From there it was all Lee, however, as the local succeeded with a sweep and transitioned to the mount. Lee eventually got Gonzales-Hills' back and locked in the painful-looking twister — grappler Eddie Bravo's signature spinal crank — for the submission victory.



**"IT MIGHT BE THREE TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE I CAN EAT AN APPLE, LET ALONE TAKE AN IMPACT."**

— **Ronda Rousey** on her injuries following UFC 193 to *ESPN The Magazine*.



**"WHAT I AM LOOKING AT IS A LONG-TERM THING. I'M TRYING TO HAVE NOT ONLY AS MANY FIGHTS AS I CAN RIGHT NOW, BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN THE END OF YOUR CAREER COULD BE, BUT ALSO TO BE ABLE TO HOPEFULLY BE THE UFC CHAMPION ONE DAY, AND I'D LIKE TO BE THE YOUNGEST."**

— **Sage Northcutt** in the lead-up to UFC Fight Night: Namajunas vs VanZant to *MMAFighting.com*



**"...BY FAR THE BIGGEST UPSET IN UFC HISTORY."**

— UFC commentator **Joe Rogan** after watching Ronda Rousey fall to Holly Holm at UFC 193 in Melbourne.

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— **The White House** in response to the 115,000 signature petition sent in appeal against the NSAC five-year suspension against Nick Diaz for his third marijuana-related violation.





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# 5 MINUTES WITH... MARK HUNT

BY SUBMISSION RADIO

**Were you surprised by the outcome of the Holm/Rousey fight?**

Not really, no. I wasn't surprised at all.

**What are your impressions of Holm?**

She's a nice person, just like Ronda's a nice person. But yeah, the fight's a fight and she got caught.

**What did you think of Holm making a head-kick KO prediction before the fight even happened?**

All of us were watching in the back and I came in [after my fight] and I said to the guys in the back, "She's going to give her a high kick," and that's exactly what happened. So you know, I should have made a bet on it.

**Did the fight with Bigfoot Silva go the way you planned it?**

It went the way I planned it. I was just thinking, 'Maybe I should prolong the fight.' But then I thought, 'Oh, stuff it. I might as well just get out of here and try and get another fight at the end of the year.'

**How did it feel walking out in front of 56,000 Aussie fans?**

It was great. It's always great to walk out in front of a huge crowd, especially if it's in your own backyard. So, I felt really, really good about it. Yeah, I was ready to put a show on. I trained really hard for it and it was good.

**How would you see a rematch with Stipe Miocic going?**

It would be the same way that happened with Bigfoot. He's going to get knocked out.

**Who do you think is winning between Overeem and JDS?**

I don't know. Now that they have the stricter drug testing in there, I don't know who wins out of those two. Depends on if Alistair's cheating or not. He's known for cheating before and it's probably what might be the difference.

**Out of all the possible rematches, who would you like to fight next?**

The guy with the belt is the one I want. I'm interested in the guy with the belt at the moment. That's what I'm interested in. Whoever the UFC put me with, that's fine.


**Do you want to fight on the Brisbane, Australia card in March?**

Of course. I'll RSVP that (laughs).

**Would you be interested in a fight with Frank Mir?**

Of course. It's the top end [of] fighting, so I mean it doesn't really matter. His game's improved, but so has mine, but that's just the way it is. If it's Frank Mir, then it's fine with me.

**How quickly did you put weight back on after UFC 193?**

I've put on like 10 kilos in a week. I put eight kilos on in two days. So that's what happens when I don't end up straight back in freakin' camp or training, I end up being a fat arse and start putting on weight! 





# NEW BLOOD

Mixed martial arts is the fastest-growing sport in the world. It garners more attention and new fans daily. The emergence of so many new athletes sometimes makes it hard for fans to notice some of the fighters on the verge of making it to the next level. **FIGHT!** takes you deep inside the sport and presents you with some of the upcoming New Blood.

BY ZACH BROADHURST

## CHARLENE WATT

**RECORD:** 6-1

**KEY VICTORIES:** Terissa Wall

**WEIGHT CLASS:** Flyweight

**AGE:** 29

**COUNTRY:** New Zealand 

**NICKNAME:** The Machine

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** [www.facebook.com/CharleneTheMachineWatt](http://www.facebook.com/CharleneTheMachineWatt)

For most fighters, having to go out there and compete against multiple opponents in the same night is a daunting proposition, but for female fighters like Charlene Watt, it's an essential way to gain fight experience.

With some women sitting on the sidelines for months, if not years, unable to find opponents to meet in the cage, tournaments like those held by New Zealand promotion Princesses of Pain are the prefect way to gain much-needed time in the cage.

"It's amazing and I am so grateful to Belinda [Dunne] from Princesses of Pain for running the tournaments," says Watt. "I think this has definitely helped to fast-track my progress and has helped put me up the rankings faster."

"I really enjoy the tournaments to be honest. So much work goes into each fight camp that it's nice to get a decent amount of time out there. I'm not gonna lie, the first one is always terrifying, but once I have been out there for the first fight, the rest don't seem as bad."

While the chance to add multiple fights to your record is a massive bonus, there are a number of downsides that come with multiple fights with varied

opponents — especially when it comes to preparing for specific matchups.

"It's extremely difficult and almost impossible to develop a game plan," says Watt. "You could put all your time into prepping for a certain fighter and never face them."

"All you can really do in these types of tournaments is focus on yourself as a fighter, and like I say, try and make your game as well rounded as possible. That way if you have worked all areas, it shouldn't matter who you come across."

Another downside, or upside if it is on your side, is the element of luck during these tournaments, where an earlier injury can leave you as somewhat of a sitting duck going into the next bout — a problem Watt has managed to avoid so far.

"Physically I am lucky enough to have not had any major injuries going into the next rounds of competition," says Watt. "I'm sure it would be much harder if you had an injury going in. I also love cardio, so I don't find the extra fight time so bad — it's still very exhausting, but I kinda love that feeling."

With all of her previous fights in New Zealand, the talented flyweight made a recent journey to Australia to face Terissa Wall for the 125lb XFC title — her first taste of fighting on enemy soil.

"Luckily I had an amazing support crew," says Watt. "I think we had about 30

people that came over to watch me and my teammate Matt 'The Viper' Vaile from New Zealand — I really just tried to focus on them."

"I do remember looking over at part of the crowd just before the fight began and some guy gave me the meanest evil eyes — clearly one of my opponent's supporters — I didn't look that way again," laughs Watt.

"It was my first time fighting in an actual cage. The promoter, Justin [Lawrence], from XFC was amazing though. The venue had a really good atmosphere and the fight went my way that night; all the work we put in on the cage paid off."

Now that Watt has gotten to taste an international victory, she has her sights set on some big overseas promotions as well as a return Down Under to defend her XFC title.

"It's been a dream come true to come away with two titles this year — I never thought it was possible," says Watt. "My next step is to aim even further and try and get some more international fights."

"A fight on Invicta or XFC would be top of the list. Maybe even the UFC if they ever add a female flyweight class. I never thought I would come this far, so I may as well keep aiming higher."

"At this moment I have nothing booked, but I will be defending the XFC title before the end of next year."



DARREN WINNINGHAM



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JUSTIN WHITE

## **MYLES SIMPSON**

**MMA RECORD:** 7-1

**MUAY THAI RECORD:** 19-7-1

**KEY VICTORIES:** Ryan Gray, Jai Bradney

**WEIGHT CLASS:** Featherweight

**AGE:** 29

**COUNTRY:** Australia 

**NICKNAME:** M16

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** [www.facebook.com/mylesM16](http://www.facebook.com/mylesM16)

**W**ith his extensive Muay Thai background, you'd expect most of Myles Simpson's MMA victories to have come via a nasty elbow, a massive head kick, or maybe even a liver-destroying knee – but the veteran of 27 Muay Thai fights has been found to be just as lethal on the mat.

The 29-year-old has recorded seven wins in MMA, with three finishes inside the distance – all via rear-naked choke – proving that opponents are showing a real unawareness of his ground game.

"I don't think it's that they have focused too much on my standup," says Simpson. "I think it's more they just underestimate my ground game and grappling skills."

"I've been lucky here in Adelaide to work with a bunch of great guys from all different BJJ clubs and have some high-level guys help me out. And the ground is so different in MMA once punches and elbows start raining down, sometimes giving your neck up seems like a better idea than being ground-and-pounded."

While a history of Muay Thai experience means most opponents are probably preparing for a stand-and-trade war, Simpson has always kept an eye on the MMA world, training along MMA fighters for years.

"I've always trained alongside MMA guys, even when I was Thai boxing, and I've been a fan of MMA since I first saw UFC and Pride back in my teens," says Simpson.

"So the interest was always there, but Muay Thai just worked out to be a better fit when I first got into training, as MMA was almost non-existent in Adelaide until fairly recently."

"My main reason for transitioning from Muay Thai to MMA was based around injuries. But also the way MMA has blown up, I felt there was more room to grow as a fighter and there are bigger opportunities out there for MMA fighters."

Simpson has come a long way in his MMA development in just a few years and it's with victories like his Valor 10 win against veteran Jai Bradney – who had 22 more MMA fights to his name – that prove he has already made a successful transition.

"Beating Jai Bradney in Brisbane was probably my most memorable MMA win," says Simpson. "I was a fan of his earlier on in his career; he is a legend of Aussie MMA and a lot of people didn't give me a chance. He came out staunching and super pumped up for it and then it was all over in the first round!"

With just one loss from his eight professional MMA fights, Simpson is determined to keep improving as a fighter and to ply his trade overseas in the near future, as well as on home soil.


"My next fight will be for the Eternal Featherweight title in 2016, but I'm still waiting to confirm all the details," says Simpson.

"I'm happy to keep fighting the best guys I can around Australia and keep proving I'm one of the best featherweights in the country – and collecting a few titles along the way would be nice. I really want to get a shot on One Championship or a fight in Japan – it's one of my big goals before I retire."

As for his record not yet boasting a KO finish, Simpson feels it is only a matter of time and the fact he doesn't yet have one is just a testament to his experience as a fighter.

"Of course I'm always keen for a knockout," says Simpson. "But if experience has taught me one thing, it's that you should try and win the fastest way possible and take as little damage as you can."

"The highlight reel KO isn't far off, but for now people need to protect their necks – watch this space."

Simpson would like to thank all his training partners, family and friends who have supported him in all of his fights, his trainers Steve, Kym, Trent and Leo Arruda, all the gyms in Adelaide that opened their doors to him and his sponsors, Inkaholics, MV2, Synergy Fight Shop, Coconut Kitchen and SUB Apparel. 





DAVID RANGI THOMAS

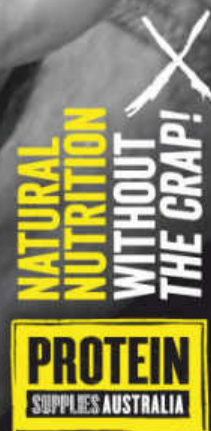
# NATURALLY FUELLED

It wasn't until my wife got sick of seeing me struggle, that she brought home a bag of brown rice protein from our local health shop and begged me to try it. Too be honest, I wasn't too keen. My biggest fear was losing all my 'gains', surely a protein derived from vegetables rather than animal products couldn't work. But sure enough, I noticed a massive difference in how I felt after the first day of using BioPro. No puffiness, no bloating and two years later I have maintained all my muscle mass & strength I was so scared of losing. I now stick to a daily combo of BioPro, BCAA's and Spark (a natural pre-workout) and I'm in better shape than I have ever been.

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# THE UPSET OF





NEWLY MINTED  
BANTAMWEIGHT QUEEN  
HOLLY HOLM DID THE  
IMPOSSIBLE AT UFC  
193: SHE DEFEATED  
RONDA ROUSEY,  
THE PREVIOUSLY  
UNSTOPPABLE  
CHAMPION HERALDED  
AS 'THE WORLD'S MOST  
DOMINANT ATHLETE'.

BY JUSTIN FAUX // IMAGES BY GETTY

**H**OLM ENTERED THE  
MAIN EVENT FIGHT IN  
MELBOURNE'S ETIHAD  
STADIUM WITH A QUIET  
CONFIDENCE. SHE DANCED TO THE  
CAGE TO THE SOUND OF BAGPIPES,  
REFUSING TO BREAK HER STEELY STARE.

Even as Rousey marched to the Octagon,  
with over 56,000 screaming, cheering and  
hollering fans in the background, Holm  
remained stoic.

Days earlier, the lifelong boxer told  
*Fight!* magazine that remaining calm under  
pressure was a necessary step towards  
becoming the first fighter to hold major  
championships in boxing and MMA.

# THE CENTURY

"Other girls have lost before they even get in there with Ronda," the soft-spoken striker said.

"I've had a lot of experiences. I've had to face a lot of different styles of fighters, I've had to fight different champions; I've had to be in deep waters, I've had to be in a lot of battles, so that has all given me a lot of confidence."

And the confidence shone through in the main event fight. Holm was too quick and too skilled for a hyper-aggressive Rousey, who charged forward, eating power shot after power shot.

By the early stages of round two, the former Olympic bronze medallist was a bloodied and exhausted mess, giving Holm the perfect opportunity to land a beautiful head kick that sent Rousey crashing to the mat with a humongous thud.

Holm followed up with a trio of grounded hammer fists before referee Herb Dean called off the contest.

The sound of silence filled an otherwise noisy Etihad Stadium for a split second as a bawling Holm circled the eight-sided cage in excitement.

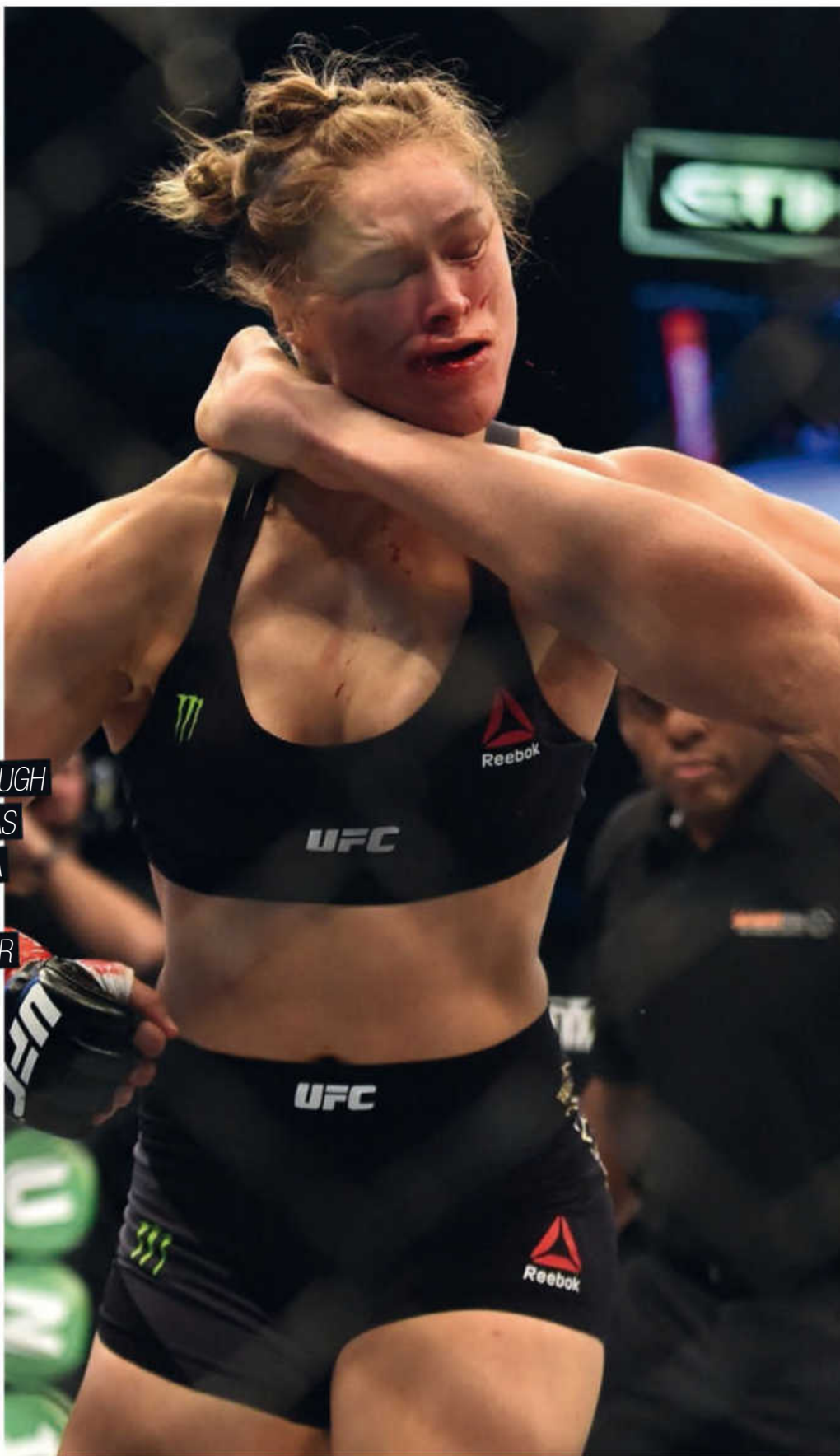
"I've never spent this much time in the gym than I have for any fight," Holm said, with tears flowing down her face after the win. "It really all came together."

AND THE CONFIDENCE SHONE THROUGH IN THE MAIN EVENT FIGHT. HOLM WAS TOO QUICK AND TOO SKILLED FOR A HYPER-AGGRESSIVE ROUSEY, WHO CHARGED FORWARD, EATING POWER SHOT AFTER POWER SHOT.

And just like that, Holm authored one of the biggest upsets in combat sports history, drawing similarities to 'Buster' Douglas' shocking defeat of former unified heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson in a Japanese stadium a generation ago.

Holm largely credits her coaches, championship trainers Greg Jackson and Mike Winkeljohn, as the driving force behind her success as a two-sport athlete.

Her team, despite the long odds and Holm's history of underperforming in the Octagon, didn't enter the UFC title fight dejected. They saw Rousey as just another fighter — a dangerous one, but unstoppable? Hardly.

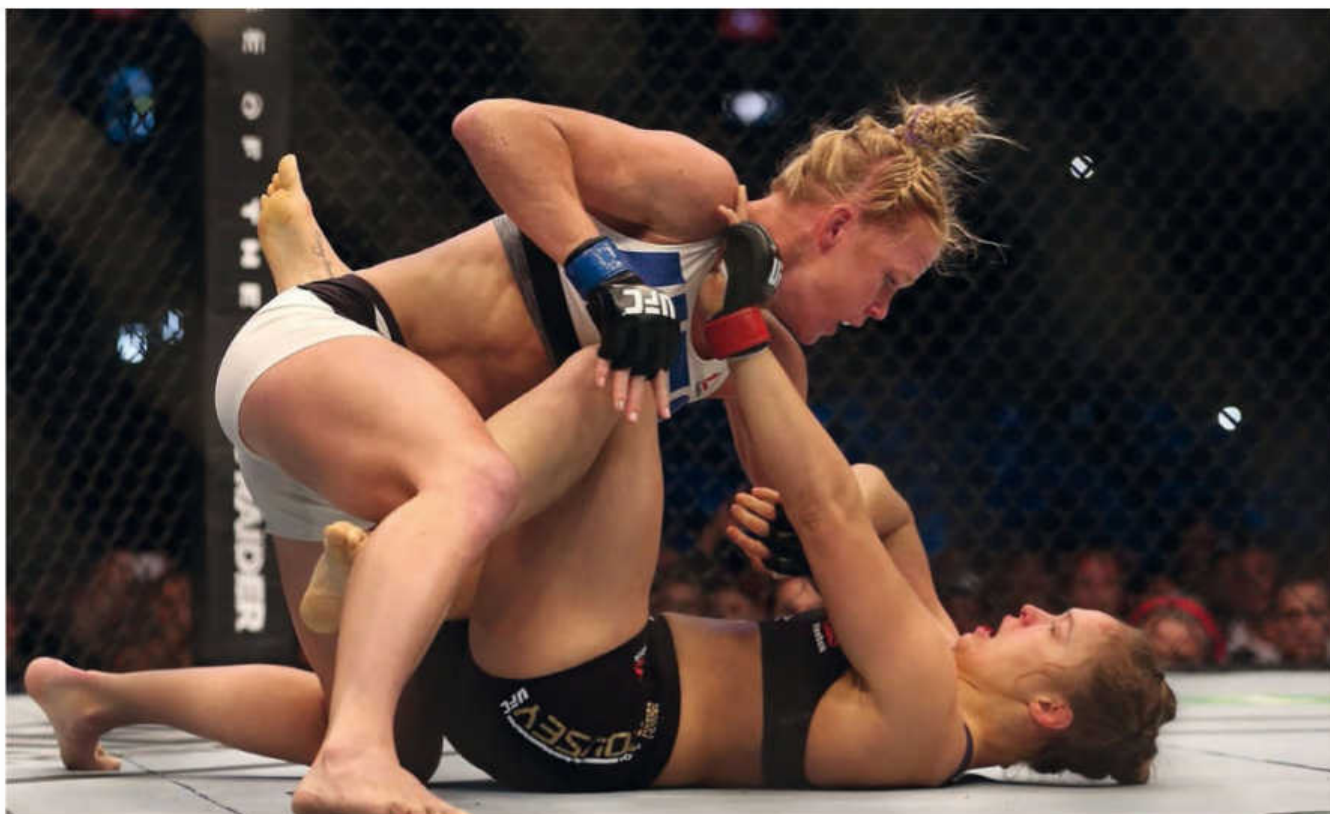






The moment no one saw coming at UFC 193





"It was pretty much what we thought would happen," Jackson told ESPN immediately following the championship win. "Obviously, she's an amazing athlete and we have nothing but respect for her, but she's been very successful doing the same things for a long time, and we were able to capitalise on that."

"The other coaches and I got together, and we're not fans. We're not like, 'Oh God, Rousey is the greatest ever.' It's just a math problem to us. So it's hard to understand the perspective just because this is what we do for a living. This is my job to figure it out."

Another person in Melbourne that cold November afternoon with unwavering confidence that Holm would become the brand-new UFC queen was Holly's father, Roger Holm.

"I knew she had it in her," he told Submission Radio. "I've watched her for so many years. When people said she couldn't do something, she says, 'Well, let's just see about that.' She's always been stubborn that way."

Roger has been his daughter's biggest supporter for years, long before she was fighting for championships and big money purses.

"I thought, 'she wants to try (boxing), this is good.' And she just got better and better, so it was pretty easy to



accept. I've always told her, 'Holly, if you want to do this, I'm 100 per cent behind you, (and) if you ever decide you've had enough and want to hand it up, I'm 100 per cent behind you.'"

Holm teamed up with Winkeljohn, her famed striking coach, at 17 and has trained by his side ever since.


'The Preacher's Daughter' had an excellent boxing career, developing into one of the most accomplished women of her era to strap on a pair of 16oz gloves.

Holm was a constant staple of the New Mexico fight scene, drawing thousands of fans to tiny casinos and dingy boxing venues to watch her perform.

The 34-year-old American racked up 33 pro boxing wins, won titles in three weight classes, lodged 18 title defences and was twice named 'Female Fighter of the Year' by the bible of boxing — *The Ring* magazine.

By the time Holm put "the sweet science" in the rearview mirror to focus





"I'VE HAD A LOT OF EXPERIENCES,  
I'VE HAD TO FACE A LOT OF DIFFERENT  
STYLES OF FIGHTERS — I'VE HAD TO  
FIGHT DIFFERENT CHAMPIONS,  
I'VE HAD TO BE IN DEEP WATERS,  
I'VE HAD TO BE IN A LOT OF BATTLES,  
SO THAT HAS ALL GIVEN ME  
A LOT OF CONFIDENCE."

her attention fulltime on mixed martial arts glory in 2013, the champion fighter had already zeroed in on Rousey.

"A new challenge was a big part of it," Holm said during a press conference before her boxing retirement match. "(Rousey) has opened doors for women in MMA. She's the one to beat and she's in my weight class, but I'm not ready to fight her tomorrow. I have MMA strengths, but I need to build on my weaknesses."

Transforming Holm from a superb striker with limited grappling chops into a championship-level MMA fighter was no easy task. In fact, it was unprecedented.

K-1 kickboxing world champions such as Alistair Overeem and Mark Hunt have had their share of success in MMA, but neither have touched UFC gold.

And boxers? You can count the number of great pugilists with any level of success in mixed-rules fighting on one hand with a few fingers left over.

Breaking that cycle wouldn't come easy, but Holm certainly had the right team behind her. The Jackson-Winkeljohn Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico has groomed UFC champions and all-time greats such as Jon Jones and Georges St. Pierre and houses its share of top contenders currently looking to stamp their place in history.

With arguably the strongest roster of fighters and coaches in the world molding Holm into a UFC-calibre wrecking machine, fans and critics intensely watched her every move.

Holm had already clocked up some MMA experience, scoring back-to-back knockout wins between boxing bouts in 2011. She returned to the cage in 2013 against Katie Merrill on the preliminary card of a Bellator event in New Mexico.

The Boston-based challenger was a bona fide tune-up opponent, getting outworked and eventually knocked out by a rampaging Holm.

Later that year, Holm penned a deal with Legacy Fighting Championship — an up-and-coming promotion out of Texas with a notable television deal with AXS TV in the United States.

It was in Legacy's six-sided cage where Holm developed a highlight reel that really got fans' blood pumping and clamouring for her UFC premiere.

Holm developed a reputation as an all-violence team knockout artist, which was underlined by finishes in six of her first seven wins.



Holly Holm during her UFC debut against Raquel Pennington

Her final bout with the promotion — a main event clash against Brazilian journeywoman Juliana Werner for the inaugural women's bantamweight title — made Holm the hottest free agent on the market.

Holm battered Werner from pillar to post, connecting with thudding kicks to the liver and torso before finishing the job with a picture-perfect head kick in the fifth round.

"It's just something that feels comfortable for me," she said in the cage, speaking of her fight-finishing head kick. "We don't focus on it, but if it's there, I just want to take it. There (were) some things with movement, so I just kept on it. Still a lot of things to learn."

In hindsight, it seems like a no-brainer that Holm, now 7-0 in her MMA campaign, would join the UFC's women's bantamweight ranks, but that wasn't a certainty in 2014.

UFC president Dana White met with Holm's representatives before her championship bout against Werner, and things obviously didn't go to plan since the bald-headed promoter later told *UFC Tonight* that he has "no interest whatsoever" in acquiring Holm's services.

The rumour mill was circling with buzz that Holm would instead join Invicta Fighting Championships — the top all-female promotion in the sport — to face dominant Brazilian champion Cristiane 'Cyborg' Justino.

"I think very highly of Cyborg, even outside of the ring," Holm said

following her Legacy championship win. "Look at how long she's been at the top, and she never walks around with her nose in the air. She stays pretty humble, and it would be an honour to share the cage with her."

Of course, that dream match never came to fruition. And whatever issues White had with Holm's management were squashed, because on July 11, 2014, the UFC figurehead tweeted a photo with a grin from ear to ear while holding Holm's freshly signed UFC contract in the air.

Holm made her UFC unveiling later that year, drawing inexperienced challenger Raquel Pennington as her debut opponent in the major leagues. The public viewed 'Rocky' as a hand-picked tune-up opponent for Holm, but Pennington wound up being more of a handful than expected.

Holm escaped with a split decision win but failed to show the finishing instincts and explosive power that made her a fan favourite on the local scene.

The 34-year-old southpaw returned to the cage a few months later, outstriking and out-scoring part-time fighter and full-time PE teacher Marion Reneau over 15 minutes to lock up a championship fight against Rousey.

These underwhelming and largely forgettable UFC appearances are a large reason why few outside of Holm's training camp were picking her to dethrone Rousey.





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**HOLM IS WELL-AWARE THAT ROUSEY WILL RETURN TO THE GYM WITH A NEW LEVEL OF INTENSITY. SHE WAS A FORMIDABLE FORCE, WHO HAS PROVEN HER METTLE UNDER FIRE.**

According to coach Winkeljohn, Holm intentionally “held back” in her early UFC matches, opting to play her cards close to her chest before the showdown with Rousey.

“Footwork is always the key for Holly Holm in her fights and Holly has held back a bit in the past and that was all part of the plan,” he told Yahoo Sports.

“We knew we would fight Ronda one day and Holly showed why she is now the best in the world.”

Either way, the peak version of Holm that trampled Rousey in Melbourne appeared to be a cut above the rest in the 135-pound division.

The crossover champion won’t get her chance to start clearing out challengers in the weight class just yet, though, with Rousey already confirmed to get an immediate rematch.

July 2016 is the likely target date when UFC aims to christen Las Vegas’ new multipurpose arena with UFC 200 — a massive pay-per-view landmark over 22 years in the making.

The company has an impressive roster of main event fighters who could slot in as the headliner for that humongous

event. There are top talents, such as Conor McGregor, who could certainly drive big business to Las Vegas next June.

Even returning superstars like Jon Jones and Anderson Silva deserve consideration, but truth be told there is no bigger fight to be made than Holm vs. Rousey II.

Holm has already consented to the return match with the former pound-for-pound queen explaining at the UFC 193 post-fight press conference that she can sympathise with Rousey getting knocked out and losing her championship.


“Oh, I welcome (the rematch). I’ve been on the other end of losing a bout before, getting knocked out and having to come back — I did avenge my loss. And I know that she’ll be wanting to do the same.”

Rousey has chosen to remain behind closed doors in the weeks following the

loss that split her lip and badly damaged her face.

The former champ’s only digital footprint since the loss has been a short message on Instagram: “I just wanted to thank everyone for the love and support,” it read. “I appreciate the concerns for my health, but I’m fine. As I had mentioned before, I’m going to take a little bit of time, but I’ll be back.”

Holm is well aware that Rousey will return to the gym with a new level of intensity. She was a formidable force who has proven her mettle under fire. Now Holm is preparing for an even better fighter than the one who previously tore through the UFC’s women’s 135-pound division with ridiculous ease.

“I’ll have to train twice as hard. You know, she’ll be coming back. She’s a competitive person, and we all know that. She’ll be coming back hard.” 



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# Betting on the

# UNDERDOG

An interview  
with GRRRL CEO  
**KORTNEY  
OLSON**

**GRRRL founder Kortney Olson says it's time women recognised that the female sportswear industry, rather than supporting women, is a con that's profiting at their expense.**

## **Please tell us how and why GRRRL came to be.**

GRRRL started more as a movement than a sporting clothes company. We're a collective of strong women and fighters of lots of different shapes and sizes and we just felt it was time to call bullshit on the sports- and activewear industry.

GRRRL is the first label not to feature sizing, instead helping women to match their shapes based on female athletes' figures. It also has a manifesto unparalleled in its commitment to right the glaring wrongs in the industry. Discarding the traditional 'size' approach to fitting garments is in direct response to size-shaming and the misleading labelling endemic in the female active wear industry, and is just one of several key differences GRRRL brings to the market.

GRRRL recognises and celebrates that women come in all shapes and sizes rather than subscribing to the industry's promotion of unrealistic body image ideals.

Activewear brands like to present themselves as empowering women. In reality, this is just a cynical marketing ploy by corporations that do nothing for women other than reinforce silly stereotypes.

The very brands that pretend to support women are actually abusing, demeaning and holding women back. If you think I'm exaggerating, I suggest you google Chip Wilson, CEO of Lululemon.

## **What is GRRRL and what sets it apart from others brands?**

We stand to celebrate, admire and appreciate all body types. We stand to erase the dogma that our worth is equated to our exterior. And, that being anything other than a size extra small is an abnormality.

We vow to employ honesty in our advertising and allow our models the

option of wearing makeup or wearing their soul. It's their choice, not ours. It is our strong belief that a woman has 100 per cent of the decision-making power over how she looks.

We will never Photoshop images of our athletes or models in our advertising or on our website. While we may Photoshop a tag sticking out or put a logo on a background — we will never airbrush, photoshop or otherwise manipulate what other companies and media outlets see as 'imperfections'. Women are perfection already. Period. We believe women have more important things to worry about than conforming to media stereotypes of what they should or should not look like. For too long the fashion industry has misled women about how other women look. Our athletes come from all walks of life and represent everything that is powerful and amazing about female beauty. And

we will never resort to using computer programs to make them look different just so we can sell a few more t-shirts or pairs of pants.

We are GRRRL: Independent. Strong. And sometimes borderline aggressive. May you hear the grrr in our name and undoubtedly know that this is our force by nature: To protect and attack for our pack. Our hood.

We are for the GRRRL Sisterhood: All for one and one for all. We will raise up and celebrate everything great about being a woman, and use our position not just to celebrate the great things but to also make a difference in the world.

That's why we give 10 per cent of profits made each year to the Butterfly Foundation and the Succeed Foundation.

## **How do you see GRRRL's involvement with MMA?**

MMA fits our brand perfectly. It's raw, exposes weaknesses, it's uncompromising — all or nothing. We hope to be involved for many years to come.

But we aren't Reebok or Nike, so we won't be able to compete at the showcase events in Vegas, but we can support upcoming challengers like Holly Holm in the pursuit of their dreams

## **Tell us about your Holly Holm sponsorship.**

We spent 95 per cent of our total marketing budget to sponsor Holly Holm in Melbourne. I don't think anyone outside of Holly's camp expected her to win. It was a gamble, but we believed in her and her pedigree and that she was a world-class athlete. So, it was probably more of a case of knowing that she could.

## **Any more cheeky bets on the horizon?**

Begins with a C and ends in borg. 





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# LESSONS LEARNED

## Jake Matthews

**Bouncing back from his first career setback at UFC 193, 21-year-old Aussie prodigy Jake Matthews is poised to become a force in MMA's most talent-rich division.**

BY JUSTIN FAUX // PHOTOS BY GETTY

**M**elbourne-based lightweight Jake Matthews cemented his position as one of the sport's hottest prospects on the preliminary portion of UFC 193.

Pitted against Akbarh Arreola, a Mexican journeyman with almost 35 pro fights, Matthews authored his third UFC victory.

It wasn't a smooth ride to the finish, though. In the beginning, it seemed his showcase fight in front of a record-shattering Aussie crowd at Etihad Stadium might end in disaster.

Arreola floored the young prospect with a head kick that sent Matthews crashing to the canvas. The 32-year-old veteran attempted to put the finishing touches on the fan favourite with a rear-naked choke, but he somehow managed to escape.

The second round was a completely different story. Matthews busted up an exhausted Arreola with a series of punches and elbows on the ground. So bad, in fact, that the veteran fighter wasn't even given the green light to enter the last round.

The action-packed lightweight fight was one of the most memorable fights on the preliminary card in Melbourne. Well, memorable for everyone but Matthews.

"I don't remember much," a candid Matthews told *Fight! Magazine*. "I remember the first half of the first round, and when I got kicked (in the head) I can't remember anything from then."

"I remember Dad talking to me between rounds and then we stood up and got ready to go again and I can't remember anything after that. Next thing I knew I was backstage doing interviews and I looked at Dad and asked, 'Who won?' He looked at me and said, 'You won,' so I said, 'Okay, cool.' I'm a bit spewin' that I missed speaking to Joe Rogan. I always wanted to be interviewed by Joe Rogan. I finally did and I can't remember it."

For Jake's father, Mick Matthews, it was one of the hardest experiences of his life as he struggled to juggle the roles of a trainer and concerned father.

"That was tough," he admitted. "If you watch that video, at the end of that fight I was still a little bit shaken by that

first round. From a coach's perspective, Jake turned it around and that was great, but at the end I was still a little bit numb.

"Arreola gave Jake just about all he had there with the head kick, the ground-and-pound and the submission attempts. It was good for Jake as a growing fighter, but it wasn't good for me."

Mick has been by Jake's side from the beginning. Ever since his youth, when his son chose a path in sports, whether swimming, cricket or footy, he's served as his coach and mentor.

So when a teenage Jake found a new passion for combat sports, it was a no-brainer that his dad would become his head trainer.

And believe it or not, the father-son team trained in a tiny shed in their backyard. Their homemade gym was six metres by four metres in size, and only had the bare essentials.

The rinky-dink shed wasn't perfect, but it remained Matthews' run-down training facility for years — even after his UFC debut.

"We had a heavy bag, a mat space of about five-by-five metres, a medicine



**“HE LOOKED AT ME AND SAID ‘YOU WON,’ SO I SAID, ‘OKAY, COOL.’”**

ball that we did a bit of conditioning with and that’s about it,” Jake recalled.

Matthews, like most young men from Victoria, initially had aspirations of playing Aussie Rules football. He was a good athlete and a handy on-baller who thought he had a chance to go all the way as a pro.

Even after the Epping-based fighter started competing in matches, the dream was still to get recruited by an AFL squad as a speedy centre or a halfback flanker.

A 16-year-old Matthews simply saw training kickboxing or judo as a great way to stay in shape during the off-season. With that carefree attitude toward combat, it should come as no

surprise that Matthews agreed to fight a 24-year-old amateur fighter on just four days’ notice.

“One of the local gyms was looking for a fighter at my weight class and I was happy to put my hand up,” Matthews said. “I didn’t really care if I won or lost, it was all about the experience.”

Matthews, who admits that he had only seen a handful of MMA fights before then, won the amateur bout and continued to take on rookie challengers through his teenage years — racking up a 10–0 record before turning pro.

Still a teenager when he made his pro debut, Matthews drew Sydney-based tough man Sam Fiamatai on a small local card in Melbourne.



The youthful Aussie overwhelmed Fiamatai with his more well-rounded skill set before finishing him in the middle frame. Then Matthews returned a few months later to destroy MMA debutant Jason Zivkovic in just 23 seconds to round out a perfect start to his prize fighting campaign.

In 2013, Matthews joined the Australian Fighting Championships — then the most prominent Victorian MMA promotion — where he quickly asserted himself as one of the local favourites with two dominant wins.

With his unblemished record, youthful appearance and local recognition, Matthews was an obvious choice to wear a green-and-gold jersey to represent his home nation on the UFC's *Ultimate Fighter Nations: Australia vs. Canada* series.

Living in a snow-covered cabin in Canada, Matthews was separated from

friends, family and civilisation for seven weeks.

Training under team coach Kyle Noke and alongside teammates such as four-time Olympic judoka Dan Kelly and current welterweight up-and-comer Brendan O'Reilly, it was a brilliant learning experience for the largely unknown fighter.

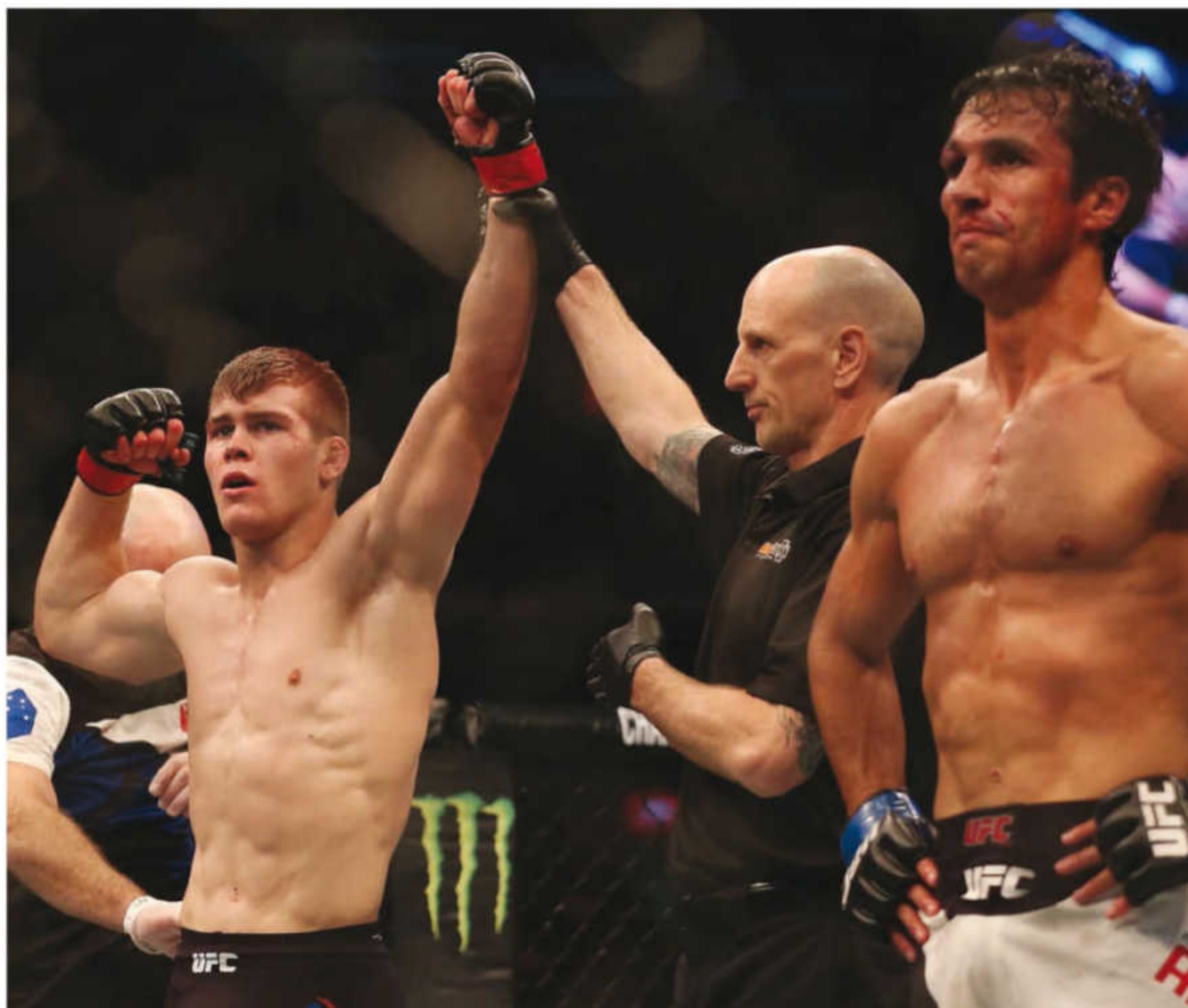
"I'd do it again in a heartbeat, and wouldn't trade that experience for the world," he enthusiastically added.

Jake's dad, on the other hand, remembers the experience differently, spending the next two months "twiddling his thumbs" and waiting on the bench.

"That was terrible," Mick laughed. "I don't think Jake had been away from home for more than three days on a school camp or a weekend trip with his mates before that."

To compete on the hit reality series, contestants have to give up their

**MATTHEWS,  
LIKE MOST  
YOUNG MEN  
FROM VICTORIA,  
INITIALLY HAD  
ASPIRATIONS  
OF PLAYING  
AUSSIE RULES  
FOOTBALL.**





phones, access to television or media and just about every other comfort available in the real world — a rough split for a father-son duo who are typically inseparable.

“The last time I heard from (Jake) was when he arrived in Canada, and then I never got a phone call for seven weeks. I actually rang one of the contacts for the production company a couple of times just to check up on how he was doing.”

While Mick impatiently waited for his son to return home, Jake quickly asserted himself as one of Team Australia’s top talents, with many of his sparring partners picking him to go far in the tournament.

Matthews didn’t make it past the first round, though, dropping a decisive decision to once-beaten Canadian prospect Olivier Aubin-Mercier from Team Canada.

“It was different. I’d never not had my corner boys in my corner, I’d always

fought in front of a crowd, I’d never fought in front of that many cameras before, and I had to wait five weeks before I got an opponent,” he added.

“It was a weird feeling. I don’t think it was a lack of experience (that led to the loss), it’s just that you need to know when to flip the switch and get comfortable, and I didn’t at that time.”

The Melburnian left the series dejected and disappointed. His dream of becoming the youngest fighter to earn a six-figure contract with the UFC was dashed.

Luckily for Matthews, his appearance on the show put him on the UFC’s radar as a talent to watch in the immediate future.

Previous Aussie fighters such as Dylan Andrews and even Matthews’ coach Noke failed to win the reality television series years earlier but used their appearance on the show as a trojan horse to get into the elite mixed martial arts promotion.

That’s exactly what Matthews did, too. After just one win on the local scene, the fast-developing rookie got the call to fight on the company’s debut event in New Zealand.

In the feature bout of the preliminary card, Matthews dominated Dashon Johnson, an unproven fighter who was considered a worthy prospect at the time due to his perfect 9-0 record.

Matthews followed up that impressive showing with another cracking win, smashing 2nd Degree Brazilian jiu-jitsu Black-belt Vagner Rocha, before submitting he grappling ace.

By this point, Matthews admits that he began to believe his own hype. At every turn, fans and reporters praised the youngster for being a future contender. Before he knew it, Matthews was dancing on the line between confidence and arrogance.





**RINGSIDE**

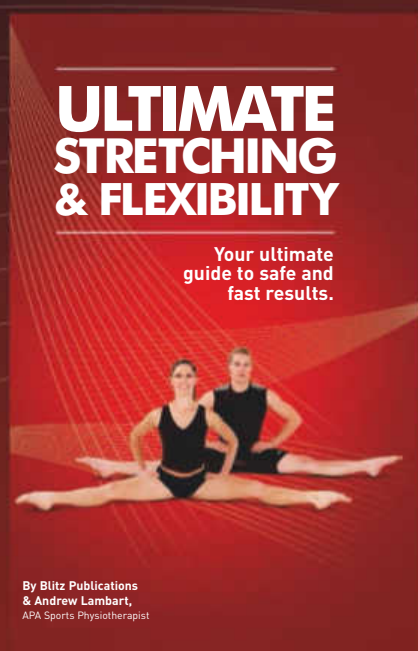
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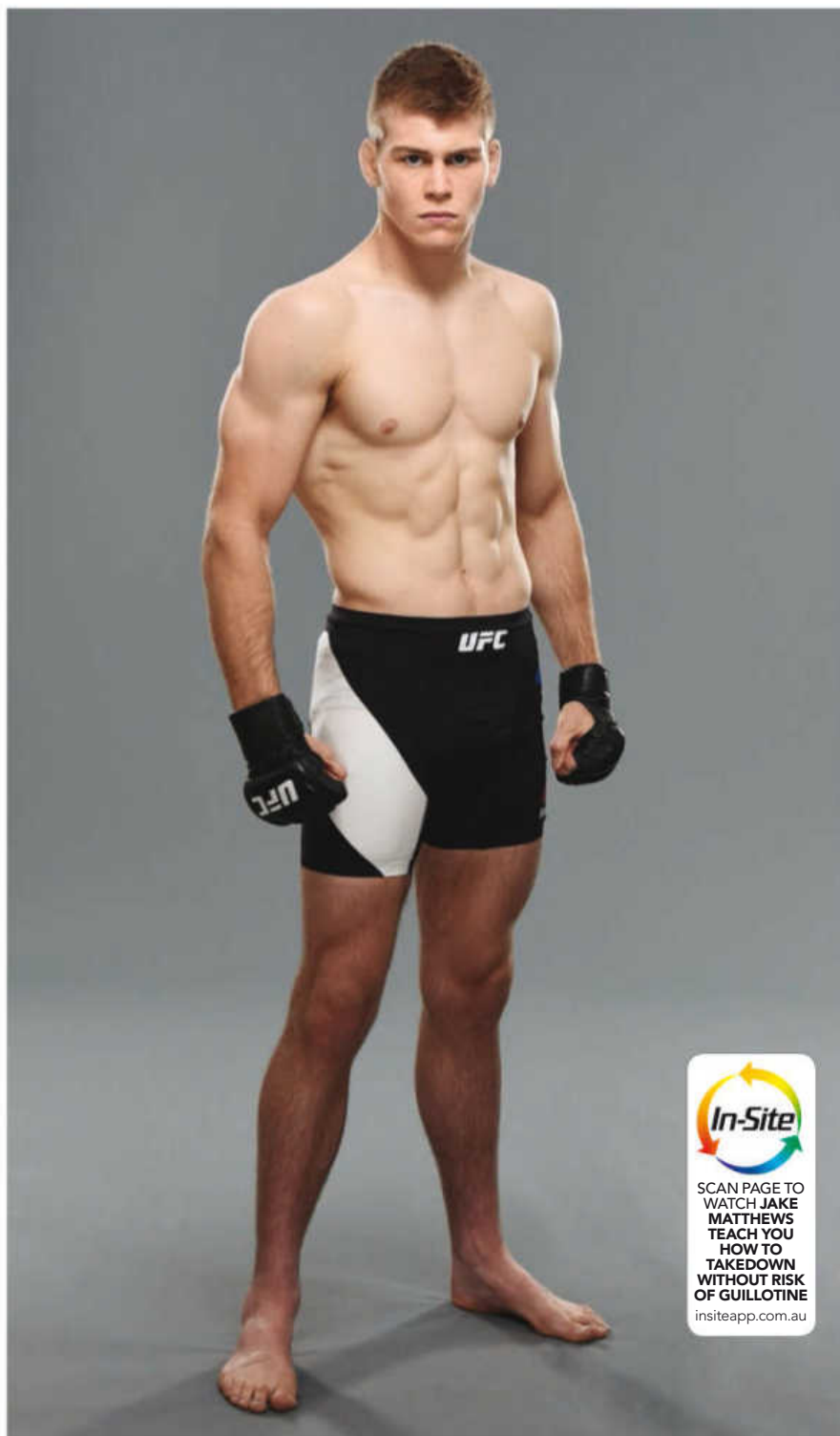
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**“I DEFINITELY LEARNED MY LESSON AND DON’T THINK IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.”**

“I was having a documentary filmed on me for that fight. It was my first fight on the main card and I had a lot of media obligations, and I sort of got sucked into the hype,” he admitted.

“It all went to my head and I got cocky. I thought I had him and I’d win easily, so I looked past my opponent. I was worrying too much about what I’d do after the fight, which I’d never done before.”

Entering as a whopping six-to-one favourite with the bookies, Matthews dominated the early moments of the bout but wound up making a big mistake — leaving his neck out while executing a takedown.

James Vick, a seasoned grappler under coach Lloyd Irvin, seized the opportunity, locking up a choke to hand Matthews his first official defeat.

“I definitely learned my lesson and don’t think it will happen again,” he said.

Matthews took that lesson into his clash against Arreola in Melbourne. Despite a rocky start, the young veteran rose to the occasion, returning with a vengeance to bloody and batter his significantly more experienced adversary.

And he is content to keep progressing, but first he is using his down time for a well-deserved rest.

“This year I haven’t had a break at all,” he said, “I was training for Adelaide (against Vick) for about 12 weeks, had that one, then asked (UFC matchmaker) Joe Silva to be on the show in Glasgow, Scotland. Even though I didn’t fight on that one, I still trained for eight weeks,” he detailed.

“I got injured a few days before we were supposed to fly out, rehabbed my ankle, that took six weeks and was mentally draining. And after that I went straight into camp for Melbourne (against Arreola), so it’ll be good to take a break.”

After cheating on his diet and spending Christmas season with his family, Matthews plans to fight again when the UFC returns Down Under to host the Brisbane Entertainment Centre in March.

After that, the 21-year-old aims to continue his hike up the lightweight ladder with a few more fights overseas.

“We might have a look and see where I am in the rankings, and who’s around there to call someone out, but if not, we’ll just trust the UFC and their matchmaking abilities — they’re the best in the world, and always give me good fights.” 🍌



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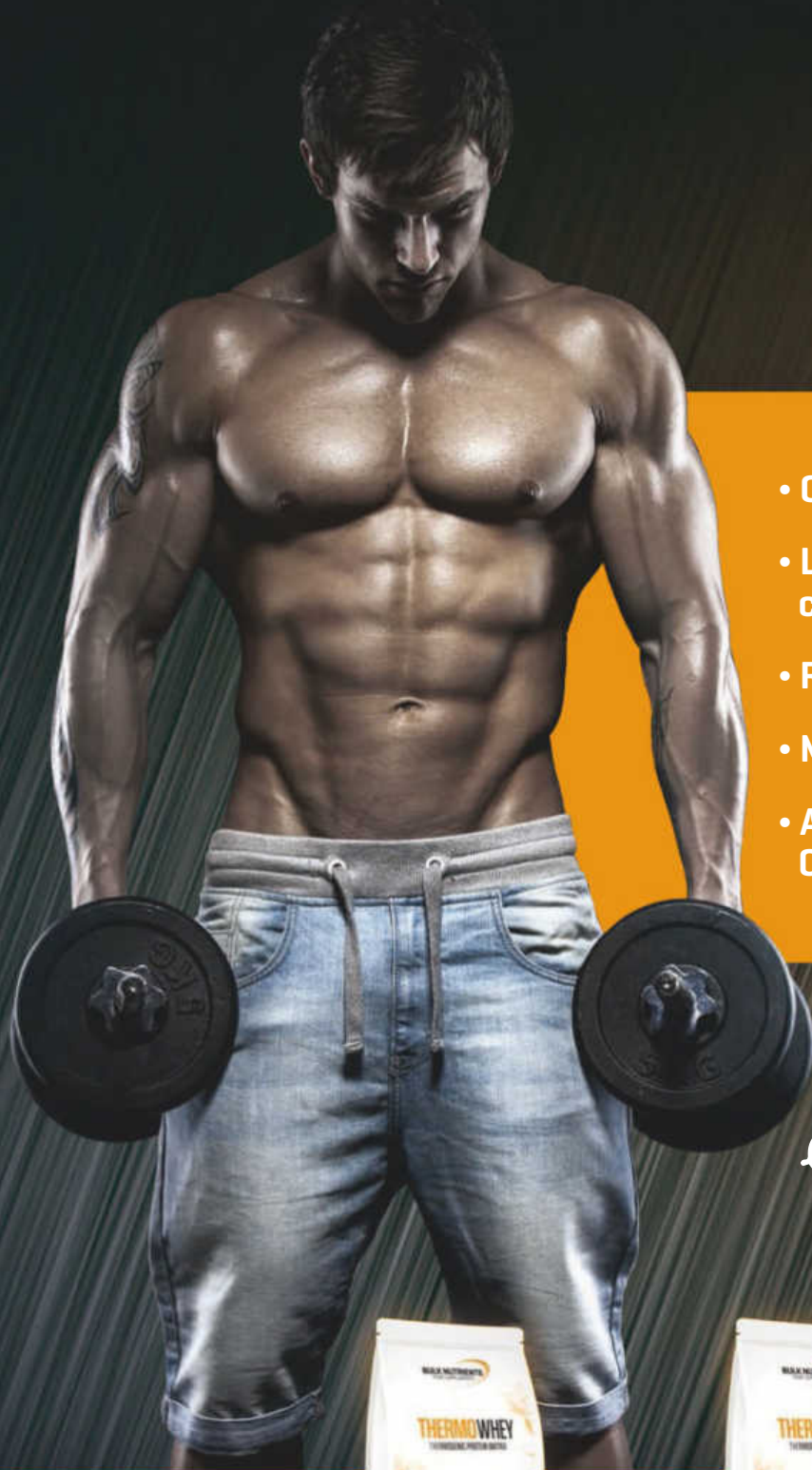


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## **Were you surprised Whittaker was able to beat Uriah Hall?**

The fight went down just the way I thought it would. I picked Robert to win the fight. Robert is much busier and he's faster on the feet. You know, Uriah is more explosive and he's more explosively fast, but Robert is just, he moves fast, he fights at a higher-paced tempo, and I thought he'd win a decision — which is what happened.

Uriah Hall, for all his brilliance, kind of takes his foot off the gas at times and he's just kind of a point fighter in some ways — although his points when he lands them are devastatingly powerful — but he's still kind of a point fighter. He doesn't fight at a high tempo. So I thought that would play into Rob's hands and yeah, he proved me correct.

I don't want to turn this into a bad-mouthing of Uriah Hall. Robert Whittaker did a great job, but at the end of the day I'd have beaten them both.

## **Hall was coming off a big win over Gegard Mousasi, what did you make of that fight?**

As I just said, I don't want to turn this into a trashing Uriah Hall session, but I think that's what it's going to turn into with my next comment, because Uriah Hall and Gegard Mousasi could fight another 99 times — they could fight 100 times — and other than that freak occurrence, Mousasi would smash him every single time.

That isn't a detrimental comment towards Uriah Hall, that's just how good I think Mousasi is. Mousasi is an incredible fighter. This is a guy that was gonna represent the Netherlands at the Olympics with his boxing, which is as good as it can get. He's got high level boxing and great level kickboxing, he's awesome on the floor, his wrestling is good, he's very experienced, he's very composed when he fights. You put all those things together, you've got a very formidable opponent, but certainly a beatable opponent.

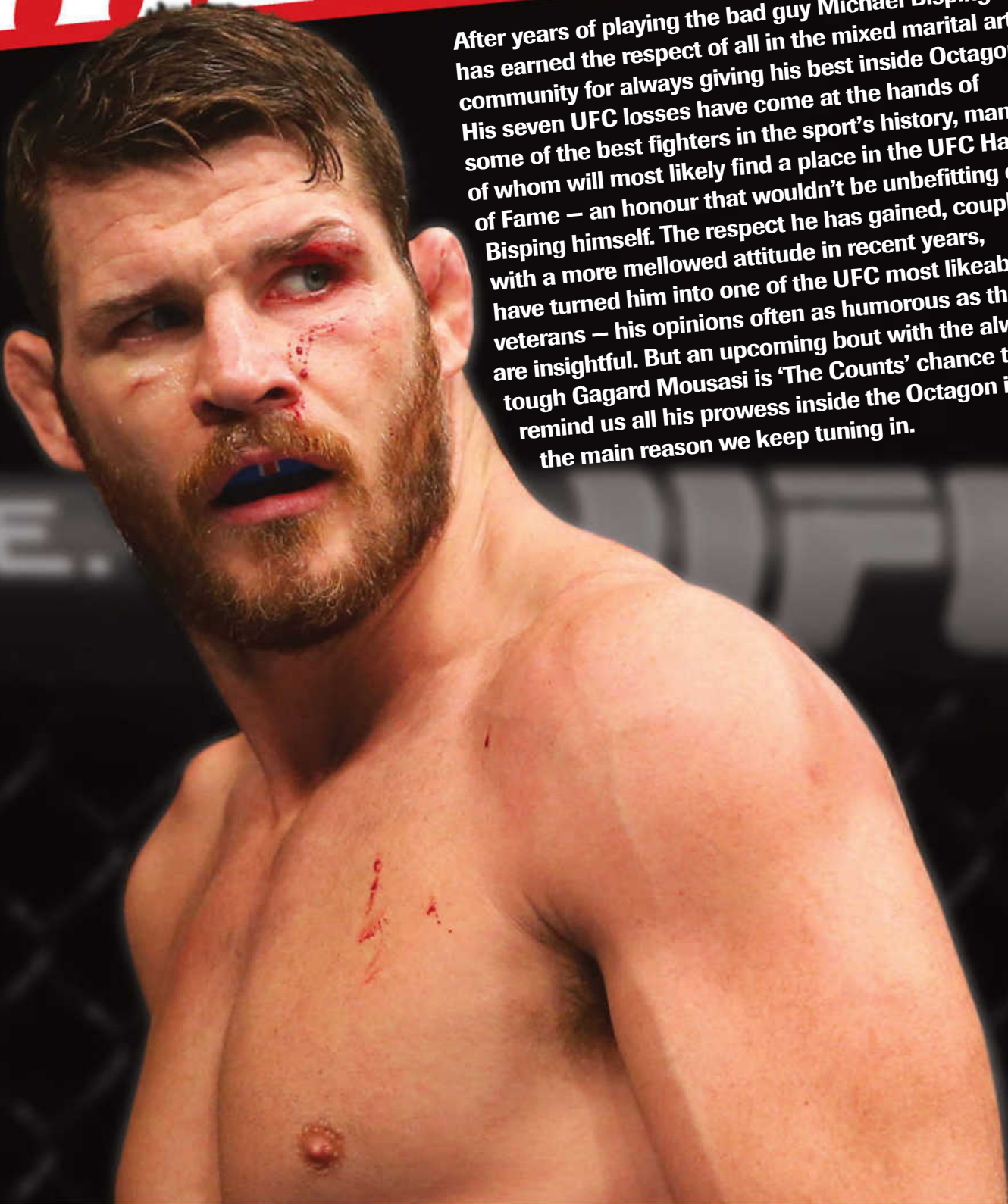
I see some flaws. Since he came to the UFC I think he's won three and lost three, so you know, it's not like he's unbeatable, but certainly a formidable opponent that I'm going to have to prepare for.

## **Do you see yourself beating Mousasi on the feet in the striking?**

Yeah, of course. I always see myself winning on my feet. I think I fight at a higher tempo; I'm faster than him and ultimately I think I've got a more diverse striking game. But we'll see — and I think I'll have the strength advantage over him. I see him kind of getting bullied in the strength department at times — he gets taken down quite frequently. So listen, this is a mixed martial arts fight and in this fight you're going to see a full display of everything that he can do and I can do. I don't think having a one-dimensional game plan will be successful against this guy. I'm going to



# THE COSTS

A close-up photograph of Michael Bisping, a mixed martial artist, in a UFC octagon. He is shirtless, showing signs of a recent fight with blood on his face and chest. He has a beard and is looking off-camera with a determined expression. The background is dark with the UFC logo visible.

After years of playing the bad guy Michael Bisping has earned the respect of all in the mixed martial arts community for always giving his best inside Octagon. His seven UFC losses have come at the hands of some of the best fighters in the sport's history, many of whom will most likely find a place in the UFC Hall of Fame – an honour that wouldn't be unbefitting of Bisping himself. The respect he has gained, coupled with a more mellowed attitude in recent years, have turned him into one of the UFC most likeable veterans – his opinions often as humorous as they are insightful. But an upcoming bout with the always-tough Gagard Mousasi is 'The Counts' chance to remind us all his prowess inside the Octagon is still the main reason we keep tuning in.



have to mix it up, keep him guessing, but ultimately I do like to fight on the feet, so I think predominantly that's where it will take place. But I will look to take him down and use the good old ground-and-pound, as you say.

**Is it frustrating for you to see names like Leites, Maia, Marquardt, Cote, Okami and Lutter get title shots while you haven't?**

Yeah, no, no, it is very frustrating that I haven't had a title shot. Certainly even more so when you rattle off some of the names that did get titles fights. I mean, Patrick Cote, come on, for crying out loud. There was a few guys that had title shots over the years, you know, that weren't exactly the best contenders. But also on the flipside, there's no one to blame but myself. I mean, the UFC have put me in number-one contender matchups three times. And unfortunately the reality of the situation is I've lost those fights. Had I won those fights, I'd have fought for the title. The reality is that I didn't win those fights, so I can't be angry at the UFC.





I had Lorenzo Fertitta walk into my dressing room prior to fighting Vitor Belfort, saying, "Listen, if you win, call out Anderson Silva, they'll go crazy because we're in Brazil. You don't want a riot, but you know, call out Anderson Silva because you'll be fighting him next."

You know, I didn't win that fight, so what are you going to do? Now, of course, there were variables at stake. There was testosterone replacement therapy, there was people taking steroids and things like that. I mean, all three of my number-one contender matchups — Chael Sonnen, Vitor Belfort and Dan Henderson — they were all on extra supplements to grow enhanced synthetically. They were allowed to manipulate the system and they were all allowed to be cheating in something that's now outlawed. So yeah, that does sting a little bit. And a lot of those fights would have been very different had testosterone not been a factor. But what are you going to do? You know, you get on with it. And listen, I'm still here. I still feel a young man, I'm still performing well, got a big fight with Mousasi — who knows what the future holds?

**Did you enjoy being the 'bad guy' for most of your career and getting reactions from the crowd, and how have you changed over the years?**

Listen, come one, everyone wants to get a cheer when you go out there and perform; regarding whatever it is, whatever medium you're in. You want people to appreciate you, but of course, you want energy either way. And with fight sports, combat sports and being a polarising character, you do get that shift of emotion, if you will. And as some people cheer, some of them are cheering to see you get knocked out, you know, that's what's important in the fight game, that you capture their imagination and you give them something to get excited about, whether it be you winning or you losing.

But of course, you wanna be on the side. You wanna be the guy that's getting cheered for 100 per cent. And yeah, I've certainly had my fair share of getting booed, and that's to say the least. I think as you get older — I've said plenty of things in the past. Certainly when I look back now and see those comments and hear those comments, I cringe. But I've done a lot of maturing over the years. I've been in the UFC for

***"I still feel a young man, I'm still performing well, got a big fight with Mousasi — who knows what the future holds?"***





10 years, and as I said, done a lot of maturing. The other problem is, when you put your foot in it sometimes when you're on TV, with the whole world watching — everybody's put their foot in it. Everybody's said things they regret, except people haven't always said them on TV, so that's very unforgiving.

But I've mellowed a lot as a guy as well. I've got three kids, I'm around a good team of people these days that encourage me to make good decisions and I'm a happy person. I'm a mellow Michael Bisping. Don't get me wrong, I'm still a fierce competitor and fierce fighter, but I'm not as angry as I used to be.

**How much did that accidental head butt from Luke Rockhold affect your fight in Sydney and how would a rematch go between you?**

I was doing very well in that first round and then we did clash heads, and then what happened was there was blood pouring into my eye. And the longer the fight went, the worse the blood got. If you watch the fight

— I'm sure you have better things to do than go away and watch the Rockhold fight right now — but if you do turn it on and watch it, you can see me stopping and wiping blood out of my eyes several times.

The blood was going into my eye and that did come from Rockhold head-butting me. So for the taller guy to clash heads is kind of curious. You know, he has to lower his level, and he came in with the head and still got a good old-fashioned head butt on me, and that is the fact of the matter.

And then throughout the fight I had to wipe blood away, and as I did that, he connected with a good head kick. You know, I'm not taking anything away from him. Well done. That's the fight game, that's the way it goes. But yeah, I would love a rematch, and yeah, of course I see it going differently.

**What are your thoughts on the Anderson Silva/Vitor Belfort fight? Would you still like to fight Anderson Silva if you beat Mousasi?**

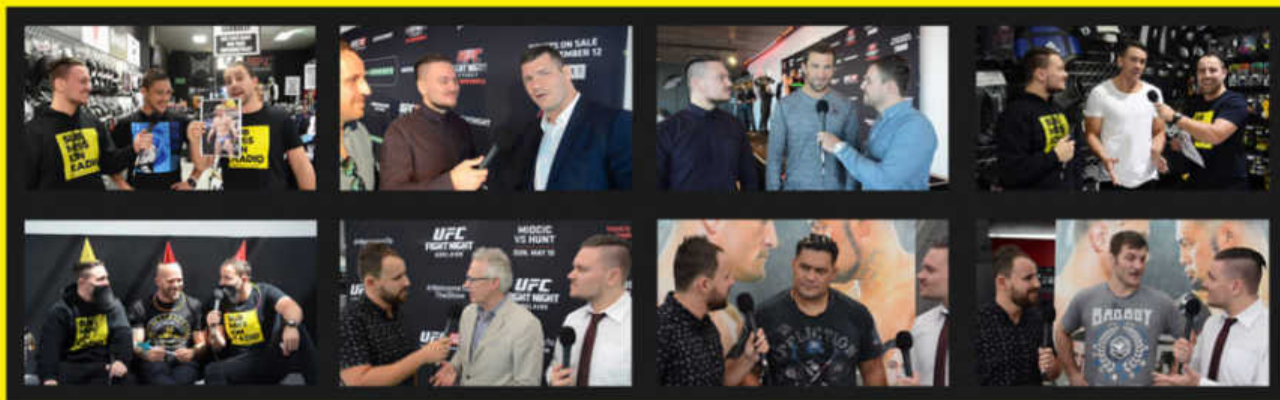
I don't know. I don't know if I want to fight any guy that has had a history of performance-enhancing drugs, to be honest. I don't see why they should be rewarded and these guys are prolific, you know what I mean? And as much as I hate to say this — I don't want to start bad-mouthing Anderson Silva, because the guy's an absolute legend — but the first time that he's tested outside of competition he failed the test, and that's a first time in his entire career he was tested outside of competition and he failed the test. So how long was he doing this for?

You know, my guess is that probably it wasn't the first time that he'd done it. You know, the rematch with Vitor and Anderson, that's an interesting one. Vitor is certainly not the same, and Anderson is getting older and he's not beating people the same, so I don't know. I don't know. But I don't really want to talk about them, to be honest. I have no respect for either man. If you test positive for performance-enhancing drugs, then you know, there's other people that deserve my attention. **👊**



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# TOP 5 UNSIGNED AUSSIES

There are currently 14 fighters from Australia (and New Zealand) on the UFC's roster. No matter how many fighters from the region are on the roster, there's always a dozen or so more who are knocking on the door trying to get their foot in to show the world that they can compete with the best. As a region we are still developing in the sport of mixed martial arts and over the past few years we have seen our fighters start to make a little bit of headway in getting their hand raised more often inside the Octagon.

With so many fighters itching to get their chance at fighting in the UFC, here are five fighters currently fighting on the local circuit, or internationally, who are not under exclusive contracts with a major promotion. These are the fighters from Down Under to watch out for and who could very well be having their names added to the UFC's always expanding roster.

## GUSTAVO FALCIROLI

**Weight division:** Bantamweight

**Titles held:** Hex FS bantamweight title, CFC bantamweight title, AFC bantamweight title, K-OZ bantamweight title,

Falciroli has been around the block, that's for sure. His first professional bout took place in 2007 and he has been featured in some of Australia's best events. Falciroli's credentials as a grappler are hard to ignore; he has been a Black-belt in jiu-jitsu since 2003 and has won an array of titles in jiu-jitsu. Falciroli has fought some of the biggest names in mixed martial arts in Australia over the years and his dominance on the local circuit saw him signed to One Championship in 2012.

Falciroli won his One Championship debut against Soo Chul Kim with a first-round submission and was then poised to meet Bibiano Fernandes in what many were calling a title eliminator. Falciroli lost by way of unanimous decision and didn't compete in One Championship again due to a long, drawn-out contract dispute.

His first fight back in action, which took place over a year later, saw him fight to a controversial no-contest against Kai Kara-France at AFC 7, where Kara-France fell out of the ring and hit his head on a ringside table. The pair were booked to fight again a little under six months later and in the rematch Falciroli made quick work of the

New Zealander with a first-round submission victory.

Currently riding a three-fight win-streak, all that is left for the Brazilian jiu-jitsu Black-belt is a chance to once again test his skills against the best in the world. There is no doubt that Falciroli can compete with the very best of the Oceania region, as he has been able to prove that throughout his career. If there is anybody who is ready and deserving of a shot for a call-up to the big leagues right now with no questions asked, it would be Falciroli. Eight years of fighting is a long time and is quite the strain on the body and mind, so hopefully the chance comes for Falciroli to showcase what he can do inside the cage before the time comes for him to call it a day.



## ROB WILKINSON

**Weight division:** Middleweight

**Titles held:** BRACE 2014

middleweight champion

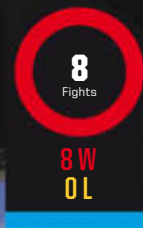
An undefeated local prospect, Wilkinson has quickly climbed the middleweight rankings. It's not the deepest division in the country; however, the tests that Wilkinson has faced he has passed with flying colours. His breakout year certainly came in 2014, emerging from an almost 18-month hiatus to secure a first-round submission victory over highly touted Kitt Campbell.

Impressively, Wilkinson has yet to see a second round in any of his fights. He has fought against fighters who have had more than double the experience that he has had at the time and has still managed to come out on top. In just his third fight, Wilkinson ventured to the United States and picked up a submission victory, showing that his success isn't just in fighting on home soil.

Fighting in the middleweight division has its own challenges. The middleweight division is a tough division to get a start in because of the sheer fact that there aren't as many fighters in the weight range currently competing in Australia; however, it's not as bad as the light-heavyweight division, which is pretty much non-existent in Australia. Stringing together a couple more wins over some of the experienced fighters in the division may help Wilkinson prove his worth, and then from there he goes from being a prospect to potentially getting his shot at one of the bigger shows around the world.

Wilkinson's momentum that he has built over the course of the 2014-2015 period is going to make a big difference as he prepares for whatever challenges he faces at the beginning of 2016. And, if he continues fighting, and winning the way that he has been, he will have some bigger and better challenges ahead of him for sure.

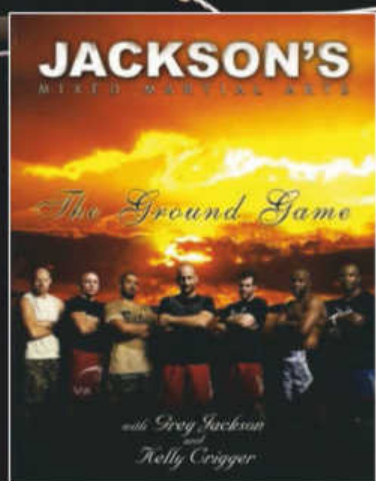
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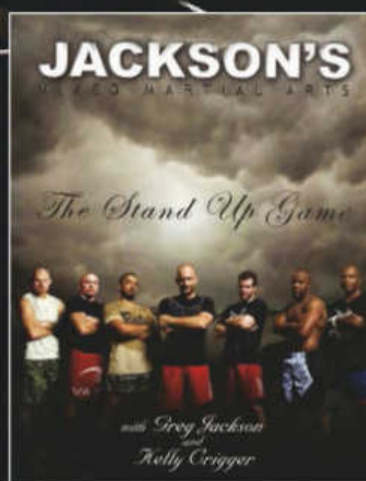
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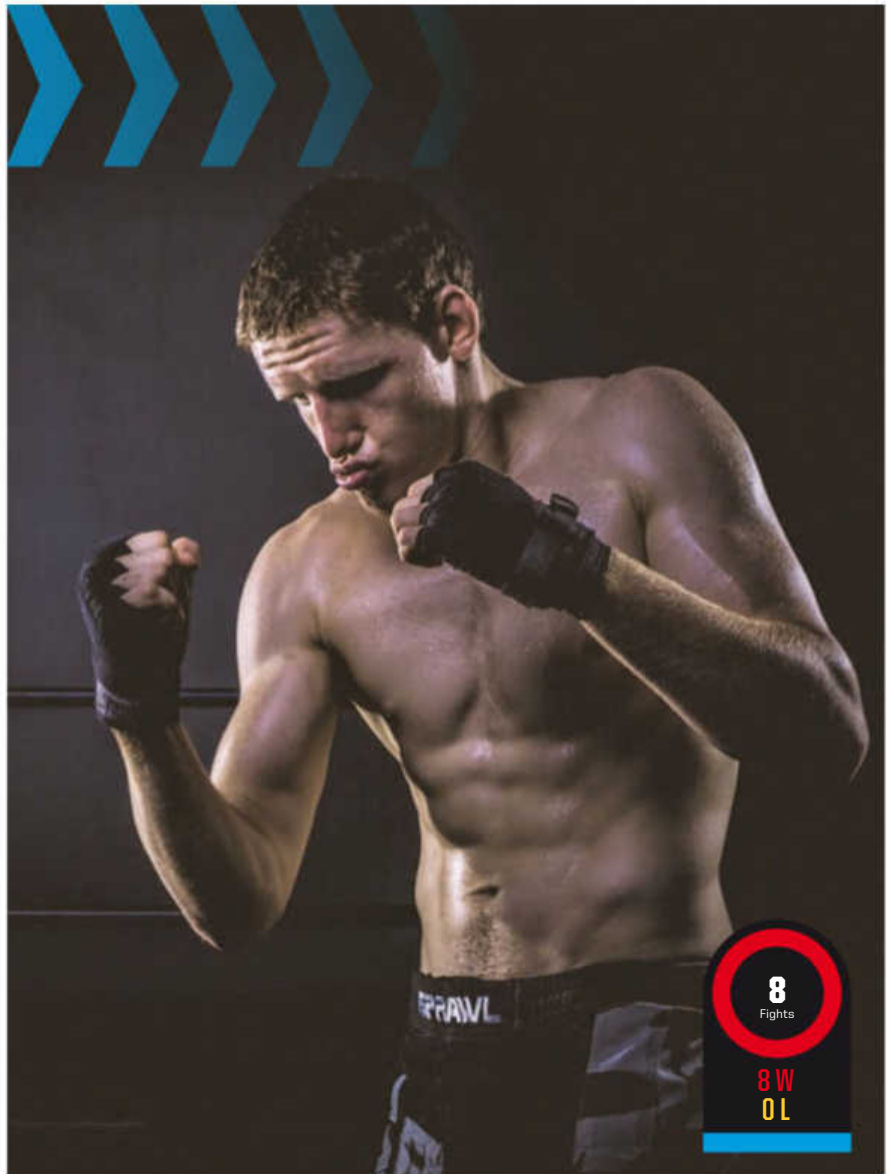
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TOP 5



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## JAMIE MULLARKEY

**Weight division:** Featherweight

**Titles held:** BRACE 2014 featherweight champion, BRACE 2015 featherweight champion

With a little over two years of professional experience, Mullarkey has shown a lot inside the cage in just eight professional bouts. Mullarkey strives to entertain and of his eight career victories, seven have been by way of stoppage. Finishing fights is something that the UFC love to see on a fighter's record, even if it is at the expense of an opponent's win-loss record.

Mullarkey has fought, and beaten, some of the best up-and-coming fighters in Australia's featherweight division. It's been a quick rise for the 21-year-old

with back-to-back BRACE tournament championship victories to his name.

Mullarkey has an aura about him and already in his young career he has plenty of passionate supporters coming along to cheer him on in his fights. Having the ability to finish fights, and do so in such an entertaining fashion, makes Mullarkey a fan favourite, which is any promoter's dream.

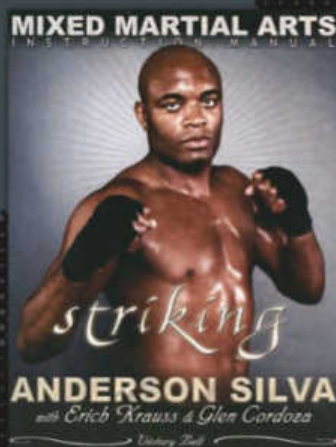
It would make sense for Mullarkey to go on to win the BRACE crown for a third year in a row; however, it's unlikely that he'll still be fighting locally by the end of the year. His quick rise could go one of two ways and hopefully it leads to him making a name for himself on the global stage. No matter how it unfolds, though, you can be sure that Mullarkey will be putting on an exciting display in the process.



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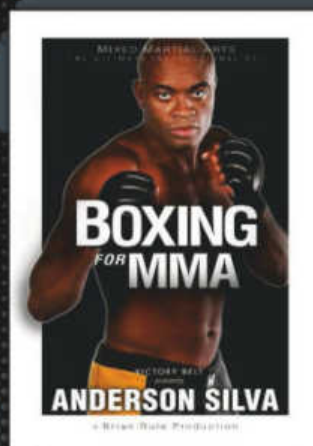


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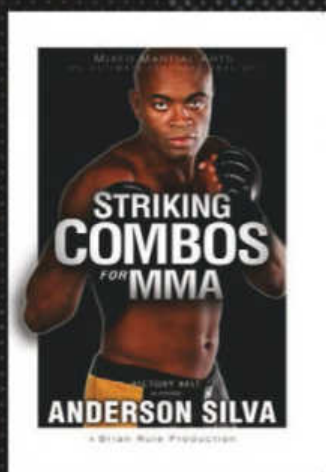
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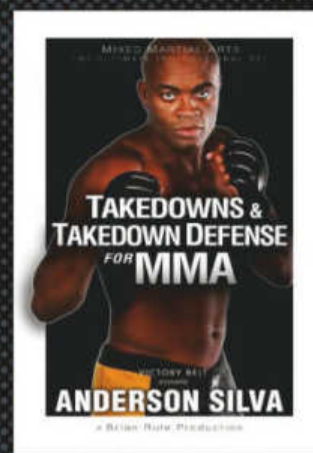
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## DAMIEN BROWN

**Weight division:** Lightweight

**Titles held:** BRACE 2015

lightweight champion, XFC

lightweight title

After losing four fights in a row between December 2013 and August 2014, the outlook for Brown wasn't looking too good. In 2013 he was signed to Europe's leading mixed martial arts promotion, Cage Warriors, and he fought for them three times, losing three competitive decisions to some of Europe's best fighters. When he had his first fight back on Australian soil, Brown met Ricky Rea in a welterweight bout. It was a fight he took in a different division and it was a fight that he went on to lose in the very first round.

Some other fighters may have called it a day; however, Brown vowed to come back stronger than ever and made sure that his next fight was going to serve as his redemption. Since that loss to Rea, Brown has won four fights in a row, with all but one being by way of submission. In the process Brown won two of Australia's top titles in the lightweight division and certainly made amends for his four-fight skid.

Brown is no stranger to fighting overseas — he has ventured outside of Australia a total of seven times since making his debut in 2010. While his record doesn't read as good as some of the other Australians who have been signed with the UFC, he has proven time and time again that he can put on an entertaining fight. Cage Warriors are supposedly looking to put on events again in 2016; don't be surprised if Brown makes an appearance on one of those cards, and then, with a win there he could finally get his shot in the UFC. It may take a little while longer than he was hoping but with a couple more stoppages under his belt, it would be hard to justify not seeing Brown compete inside the famed Octagon.



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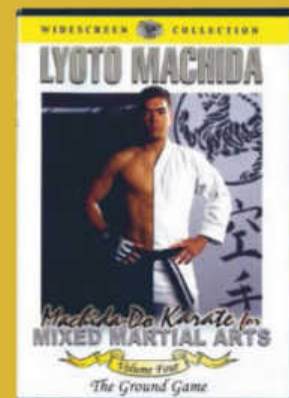
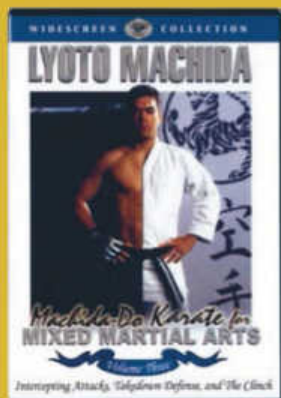
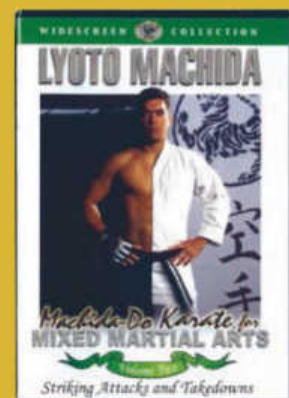
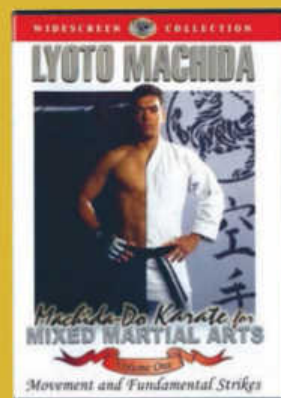


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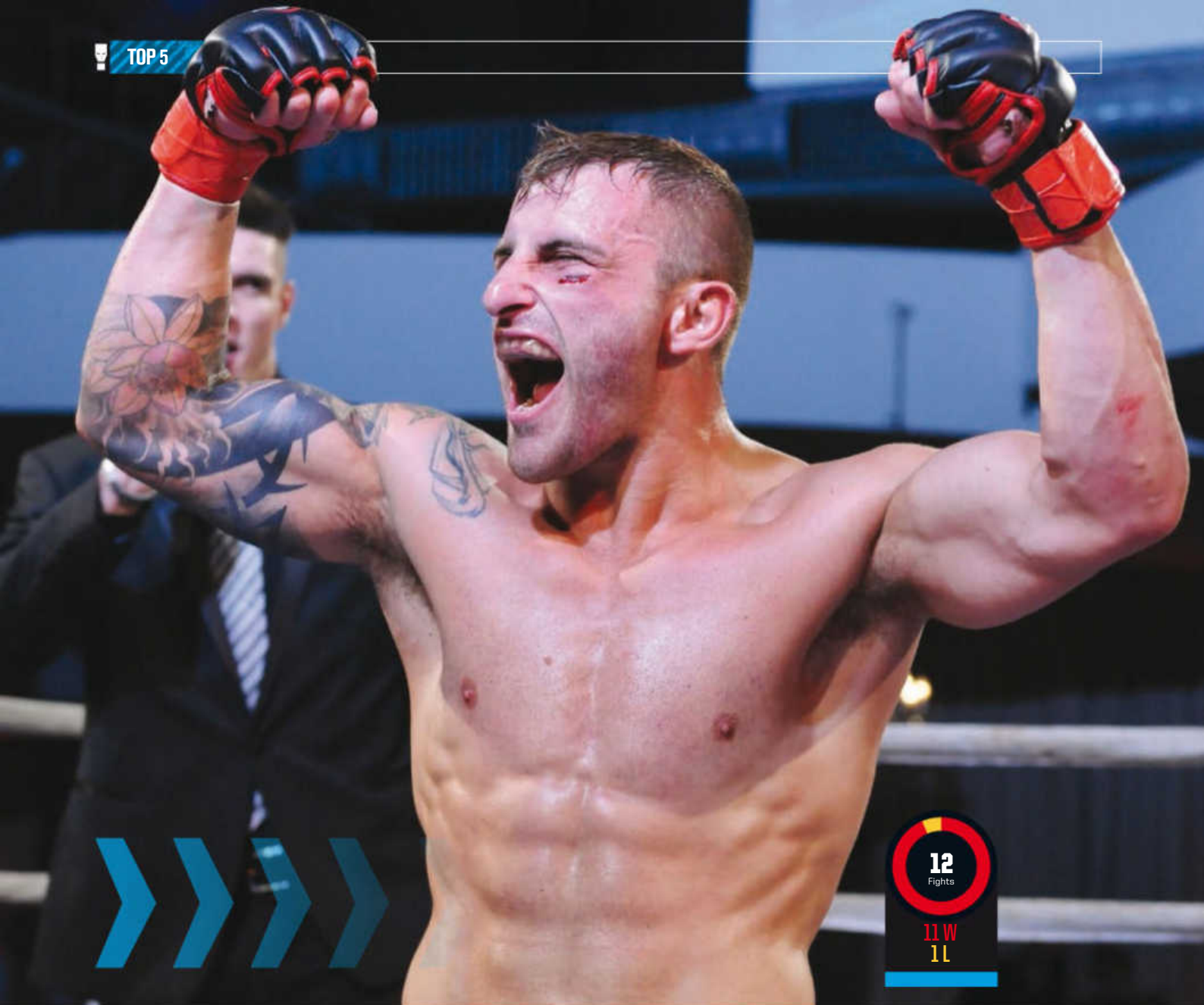
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## ALEX VOLKANOVSKI

**Weight division:** Featherweight

**Titles held:** PXC featherweight title, Roshambo featherweight title, Roshambo lightweight title, Wollongong Wars lightweight title, AFC featherweight title

Starting his career out in the welterweight division may seem as if it was another lifetime for Volkanovski, but it was an experience that helped build on his success in mixed martial arts. The first and only time that Volkanovski has suffered a setback in the sport was when, as a green fighter with just three fights to his name, he met one of Australia's best welterweight fighters at the time in Corey Nelson. Volkanovski lost the

fight in the third round, but still gave it his all. It was that fight that made him realise that he needed to drop a division, or two.

Volkanovski is currently riding an eight-fight winning streak with all but one of those victories coming by way of stoppage. Volkanovski has made a name for himself by collecting titles around Australia and most recently by winning the PXC featherweight title against Japanese veteran Yusuke Yachi at PXC 50.

The PXC 50 bout marked the second time that Volkanovski has fought outside of Australia and it's safe to say that for him, no matter where he fights, it's just another day at the office. With other notable victories over Brazil's Rodolfo Marques Diniz

and Guam's Kyle Reyes, Volkanovski has shown that he can compete against some of the best fighters outside of the big promotions.

Although Volkanovski is currently fighting under the PXC banner, it is believed that if the UFC was to call, he would be officially allowed to answer. The step up to the UFC is a big one to make, and with Volkanovski only having fought professional for a little over three years, it may seem like it's too early for him to get his call up to the big leagues, but in those three years he has faced some stiff competition, so really there is no better time than the present for him to get his shot. Look for him to be in the Octagon in late 2016, and look for him to make an impact. [f](#)





# GEORGES ST-PIERRE: **THE WAY OF THE FIGHT**

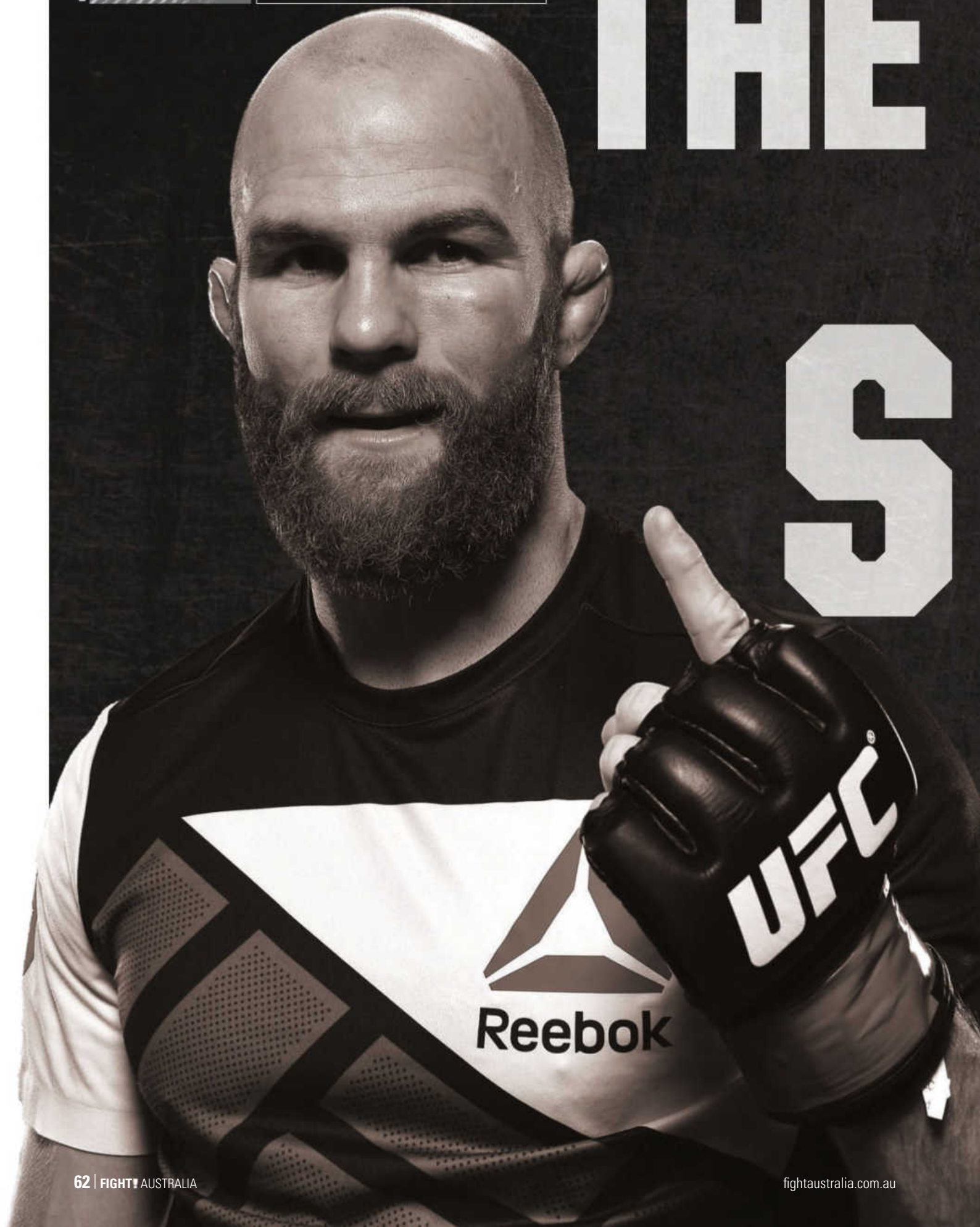
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# THE S





# HUNTER SETS HIS FIGHTS

## RICHARD WALSH

**Aussie welterweight Richy Walsh dominated in his appearance at the mega UFC show 193 in Melbourne at the end of 2015. Now he looks toward a promising new horizon in his career.**

BY NEIL ROOKE // IMAGES BY GETTY

A slight breeze cuts its way through the blades of grass and the sun blisters in the distance. The air is hot, the ground is dry — welcome to country New South Wales. The buzzing of flies and their constant need to land on any visible patch of skin is an annoyance, but it's something that you learn to live with, especially in times when making even the slightest movement could see hours of hard work run off into the distance.

For Richard Walsh it has been a little bit of a trek in the car to get to this place. It's remote, it's quaint and it's a place where he can go to wind down and enjoy life outside of arduous training camps and the high-pressure reality of the UFC's Octagon.

Stepping out of the car, it takes all but a couple of minutes for Walsh to find exactly what he was looking for. A quick survey of the surrounds and a clean shot later and it's all over. Sometimes the hunt is a long,

drawn-out process, but when the opportunity is there, you've got to take it — just like fighting and just like anything in life really.

"That particular time it took about an hour-and-a-half to get out to where we were shooting," Walsh said. "We only took the shot because it was a good shot and it was a clean shot from about 50 yards away, which hit it through the shoulder and killed it. It was a good opportunity to get some good meat and do something I enjoy."



"I saw the deer and took the shot; I had to act on it. These aren't things you can wait around for. If you wait around they'll be gone and they are hard animals to pin down. People don't realise they are an introduced species; it's not like I'm shooting some rare, endangered animals. These are classified as a feral animal in Australia. It's a bit of a waste to have them out here mucking the environment up and not hunting them."

Picking up a firearm and heading into the wilderness isn't exactly something that Walsh picked up in the gym, or in his time as a professional fighter. For Walsh it has always been in his blood, and it's something that he has taken a great deal of interest in for most of his life.

"I do a lot of hunting all over the place but that particular instance was in New South Wales on a friend's farm," Walsh said. "I do it a lot. It's something that I've been doing for a long time. My family are all avid shooters, my dad owns a butcher's shop, my brother's a butcher, my family on my mum's side are all big hunters. I grew up always around guns and shooting and it's something that's more or less in the family."

**"I SAW THE DEER  
AND TOOK THE SHOT;  
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While some people hunt for those elusive trophy kills, Walsh's passion doesn't derive from putting a head on a mantelpiece. For him, it's about the connection that he builds with his surrounds, it's about what he was taught while he was growing up, and it's about finding himself and finding his way to identify with the ways of the past.

"There's nothing like getting outdoors and hunting. It's no different to getting in the ring. Your senses are heightened, your hearing, your vision and you get that adrenaline," Walsh said. "It's all the same feelings you hear better and you start to hear things like a stick break and your eyes are sharper and they adjust to the many different shades of green in the bush. It's not this urban city landscape, you're in the outdoors and you're taking

**Walsh lays into Steve Kennedy at UFC 193**



it all in. I think it's a part of being human that we've forgotten and for me it's one of those sad things to have to explain to someone the beauty of it, because they don't understand.

"It's more so about stalking. Deer are definitely not an easy thing to hunt because they do have good senses and they're a predator; they are kind of a hard animal to get close to so you definitely have to do your work. Especially with the terrain that they are in. I mean; you might not see a deer for weeks, you might see signs of them but you've really gotta be on the hunt for those things, looking for where they've been and where they may be. It's no different to any other kind of hunting, or fishing, it's just a matter of being in the right place at the right time and making sure you are doing the right things."

The UFC embraces social media and ensures that all of their athletes are available to fans across many different platforms. With that comes the odd hiccup here and there when a fighter posts an opinion that may not gel with the majority of the general public. For Walsh, posting on social media has now become a little more of a thought-out process as his profile online becomes more and more about Richard Walsh the fighter and not as much about Richard Walsh the person.

"It's one of those things where before you post something you're kind of acutely aware of how people may perceive it," Walsh said. "Unfortunately for me it does change the kind of things I do post. After posting [about hunting], it does make you a little more self-



conscious of the things that you believe in and the things you wanna share with your fans. Some people get upset about it, and I'm sure it's a minority, but it does make you more aware of what you post and it makes it hard to show the real person through the guise of social media. You're creating an image which sometimes isn't entirely the whole person that you are. You might come off a little more serious or whatever it is. I don't think people understand that I'm not really a serious guy; I look serious and I take shit seriously in regards to what I do, but I'm not a serious person to speak to."

With the greater sense of awareness when it comes to social media, Walsh has had his fair share of UFC fans who don't exactly share his enthusiasm for hunting. It's something that he has had to come to terms with due to being in the public eye, but it's certainly not something he is going to give up just because a few people don't agree with it.

"People are gonna judge you for whatever you do," Walsh said. "I know that I'm doing something that I believe in. It's kinda insulting when someone dishes out some shit for something that you do when you're really not doing anything wrong — it's legal, I'm getting food, I'm hunting, we're humans, that's what we're supposed to do — we're

supposed to hunt. It's a bit of a forgotten skill. People are too busy using their phones and everything else that they forget how to get their own food or anything like that.

"They are entitled to their opinion. Obviously I'm pro-hunting because that's what I do. There's a connection there for me and it's something that people used to have to do in order to survive. People have long forgotten about that. It's much the same as fighting — it's a skill that people have lost. Once upon a time, people had to be fighters, or they had to have fighters in their society or tribe or whatever they had. There had to be fighters, there had to be hunters, and whether you like it or not, it's just an instinctual thing that's inside some people.

"There are others that are gonna say that to be fighting's bad and you shouldn't fight," Walsh continued. "Well, I like fighting. I like going out and I like fighting because it's inside me. People say I shouldn't be hunting — fighting is a form of hunting. I like to hunt, I'm a human, I'm a man, I'm a fucking fighter, that's what we do. That's what makes me tick — going out into the wild and seeing the beautiful scenery and hunting and feeling alive and you know, you can get a meal out of it too."

Walsh's latest bout in the UFC took place on the undercard of the record-

breaking UFC 193 pay-per-view that took place in Melbourne. Even for the undercard, there were thousands of fans in attendance, and the stadium atmosphere was set to be a whole new experience for everybody that was fighting that day.

**"PEOPLE SAY I SHOULDN'T BE HUNTING – FIGHTING IS A FORM OF HUNTING. I LIKE TO HUNT, I'M A HUMAN, I'M A MAN, I'M A FUCKING FIGHTER, THAT'S WHAT WE DO."**

"For me, walking out now, I'm a lot less nervous than what I was for Los Angeles, which was a crowd half the size," Walsh said. "You do get used to it. It's not about getting used to it and it just being normal, though, because it's not. You don't walk out in front of 60

Walsh during his UFC 184 bout against Alan Jouban



thousand people every day. What you've gotta get accustomed to is that feeling of discomfort and being uncomfortable, you've gotta be comfortable with that. If you walk out there and you're uncomfortable and nervous and feel like shit or whatever it is — when you're trying to fight those feelings, it can really wrap you up.

"This was the best head space I've been in before a fight," Walsh said. "You think just looking at it objectively that 'it's gonna be someone's last fight' and they might be more nervous. Yeah, there's definitely more pressure but it didn't make me perform any worse and it didn't take away from my camp. I just knew when I got the fight against him that if I trained hard and gave it all I've got then whatever happens, happens. If you lose the fight but you train hard and you're honest to yourself, well, that's a win. The only time you're gonna be disappointed or nervous is if you know you haven't trained hard enough and then you do lose and that's when people make excuses."

Walsh walked out with the unanimous decision victory. It was a fight that may not have been the most thrilling throughout the 15-minute affair, but for Walsh that fight was about one thing and one thing only — winning, at all costs.

"Once all the dust settled a little bit, that all felt good," Walsh said. "It was a big thing to take in. It was a huge event and a big week and hype up and it was a big fight camp leading up to it. I just wanted to get the win, and the hardest part for me was sticking to the game plan in the fight, which was to stand up at every opportunity I got. It gave me a few things to look at, though, and some things that I'll change up for the next camp.

"It was good. It was great to see all the Aussie guys I'm friends with get the win and for me it was all about getting that win — that's all I wanted. I didn't wanna go out there and put some spectacular show on doing backfists and jumping this and that; I mean, in a perfect world that's great but I knew one of our heads was gonna be on the chopping board and the risk of getting caught playing that game was a bit higher than if I played the steady game and used my strengths and played to my advantages. Now it's onwards and upwards to the next one."

The next event for the UFC's Australian schedule has already been announced, with the promotion slated





Walsh lands a big right hand during UFC 193



SCAN PAGE TO WATCH  
A RICHARD WALSH  
INTERVIEW AFTER  
HIS VICTORY OVER  
STEVE KENNEDY  
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to make a return to Brisbane on March 20, 2016. Two of Walsh's four UFC bouts have taken place on home soil, and there's a lot to think about when it comes to whether the Sydney-based fighter will put his hand up to travel north of the border.

"I reckon that can happen if I want it to," Walsh said. "It's a nice thing to fight in Australia. Especially with the home crowd and the travel arrangements and getting your team and family around to watch, and with the food, you can eat all the same stuff up until four days before the fight. You're not in a hotel in a foreign country with no car trying to get around not knowing where the fuck you are."


"It's great fighting in other countries, it's exciting, you know, but fighting in Australia is just easier for me. It does make it a little less nerve-racking, but fighting overseas does get you more exposure. There's good points and bad points for both but at the same time, whenever you're

getting ready for a fight, it's not exactly the most comfortable thing no matter where you are. Cutting weight and all that energy and everything and then at the hotel with all the fighters walking around, it's a pretty hostile environment, but it's something you've gotta deal with no matter where you fight, it's just something you've gotta get used to."


Now that Walsh is back on the winning track, building that momentum is crucial for him in order for him to climb the UFC rankings. There are a lot of options for Walsh in regards to who he could be matched with next, and while he may not have a specific name in mind for who he wants to face, he does have a small request for the UFC's matchmakers.

"I wanna get someone who has had a bit of experience and has a bit of a name," Walsh said. "That'd be ideal. I'd rather have someone that has a bit of a name. As long as I'm not fighting an Australian again, I've already fought

**"IT WAS GOOD. IT WAS GREAT TO SEE ALL THE AUSSIE GUYS I'M FRIENDS WITH GET THE WIN AND FOR ME IT WAS ALL ABOUT GETTING THAT WIN – THAT'S ALL I WANTED."**

two. I just wanna get someone that people are gonna know about. In the end, I don't really mind who they put me against, I'll fight anyone, but someone who can test me and has experience would be ideal." 

# RICHARD WALSH & LIAM RESNEKOV

**R**ichard Walsh is a Sydney-based fighter out of VT1 Academy where he is coached by the Resnekov brothers, Liam and Dylan. He was featured on the *The Ultimate Fighter* where he was the only Australian in his weight class to win a fight. He has had four fights in the UFC since *TUF* and is fast becoming known as one of Australia's top prospects with his pressure style in the cage. Richard's goal is to raise the level of Australian MMA and show the local scene that we are as strong as any fighting nation. 

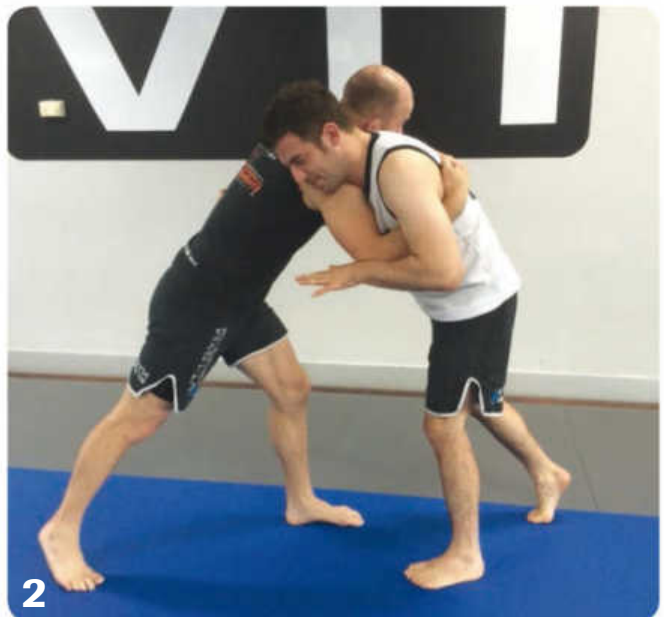
This technique is a smart way of baiting your opponent into a takedown from the 50/50 position. Often considered a stalling position, Walsh uses a knee to elicit a reaction from his opponent and follows it straight into a submission once it hits the mat. The integration of strikes, takedowns and submissions is what separates CORE MMA from the separate arts and this is a good demonstration of that concept.



## TECHNIQUE Red Army Knee-Tap to D'arce Choke



Walsh enters with a long right hand.



He achieves the 50/50 position.





**3** He throws a powerful right knee into Liam's solar plexus.



**4** Liam responds by throwing a knee back. Walsh catches the knee strike below the knee to give him better leverage.



**5** With his left foot, he backsteps in a 'run the pipe' motion, throwing Liam to the ground.



**6** Once on the ground, he stabilises his position and controls the centre of the hips.



**7** He throws a setup punch to get Liam to block.



**8** As Liam blocks, he enters into a palm grip, the precursor to the finalisation.



**9** He finishes with a triangle grip, dropping his hips into the floor, forcing either a tap or a short sleep.



**REVERSE ANGLE**

# Coffee, anyone?

## Caffeine and Athletic Performance

BY PR COLE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**Both beginners and well-trained combat athletes know that speed, agility and quick reaction times can make the difference between a well-crafted slip and a knockout. Consistent training is the first step toward solidifying neuromotor responses that eventually become second nature during competition and training. Strategic use of caffeine is a safe and effective way to enhance those responses and boost endurance capabilities.**



**C**affeine is a drug, albeit a socially acceptable one, that about 90 per cent of adults consume on a daily basis. This stimulant has no nutritional value and is not a necessary component of a well-balanced diet. However, caffeine's ability to induce wakefulness and focus is long established, which is one reason why it's become a staple of the masses. Precise timing and doses of caffeine benefit athletes in a wide variety of training circumstances ranging from stop-and-go events, endurance training, and high-intensity exercise lasting up to one hour. It's theorised that caffeine functions by decreasing perception of exertion, thus allowing you to work harder without being fully aware of how tired you are. Keep in mind, though, that the direct effect of caffeine on single-event anaerobic work is yet to be determined.

Some people are completely nonresponsive to caffeine while others are very sensitive. If you're curious about supplementing with caffeine, start with a low dose and work your way up to gauge your tolerance. It's smart to use caffeine during the course of your training but then taper use in the week leading up to a competition. This way you'll ensure maximum sensitivity to caffeine on fight day.

Just be sure to decrease intake slowly to avoid uncomfortable withdrawal headaches.

### How much caffeine do I need as an athlete?

The effects of caffeine are seen at a dose of about 1.4 mg per pound of body weight.

### When should I consume caffeine?

For athletic improvements, caffeine should be taken around one hour before your workout begins.

### What side effects should I be concerned about?

Those who are sensitive to caffeine may experience headaches and jitters even at low doses. If you're in that boat, caffeine may not be a good choice as a supplement. However, higher intakes ranging from 1.7 to 4.0 mg/lb body weight have been associated with these side effects even in those who aren't usually sensitive to lower doses. It should also be noted that people with acid reflux should avoid caffeine.

### Is caffeine a diuretic? Do I need to alter my fluids?

The most recent academic research on the subject shows caffeine may contribute

to a slight increase in urine production, but it does not significantly impair overall fluid status in the body. If you have healthy hydration habits already, then there's no need for any changes.

### Is coffee the best way to take in caffeine?

Coffee is not the ideal way to utilise caffeine as a performance enhancer. It's difficult to get a precise dose of caffeine through coffee, for one thing. Additionally, experiments have demonstrated that while caffeine by itself produced favourable effects for athletes, coffee did not yield the same results, implying that a solo dose of caffeine is preferable. There may be compounds in coffee that negate the effects of the caffeine. However, though it is not as potent as isolated caffeine, coffee still offers some level of improvement.

### How long does the caffeine buzz last?

This depends on the individual response and dose. Generally, effects can be seen up to six hours post ingestion. So if you're an evening warrior, I don't recommend caffeine as it may interfere with sleep quality. ☹



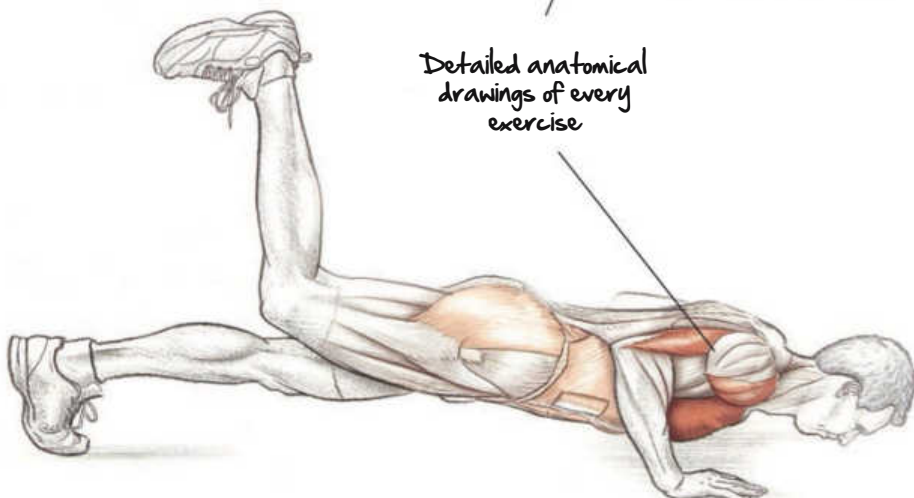
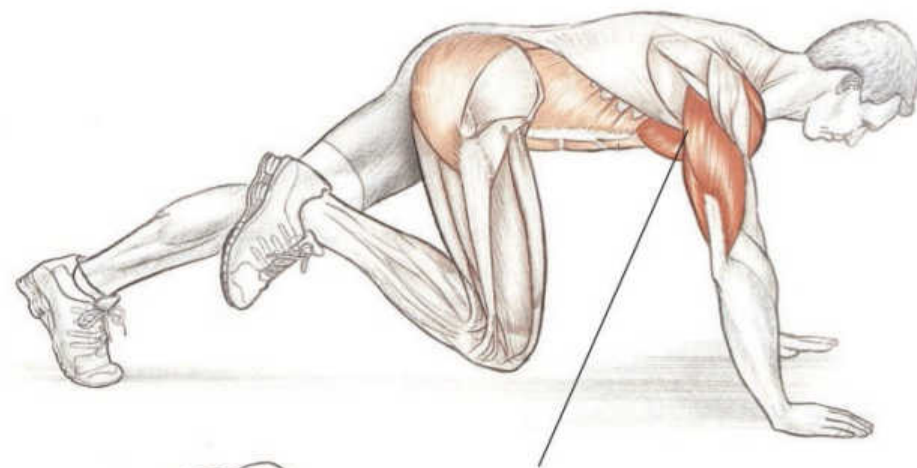
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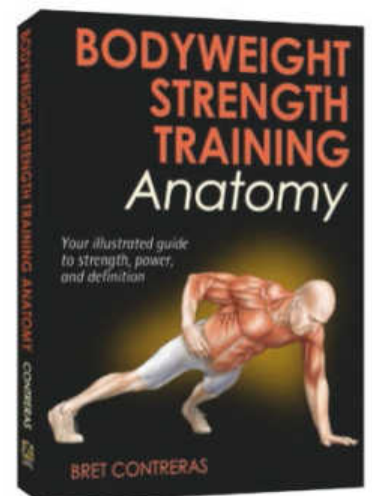


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# Dr Q&A

Dr Peter Lewis takes the time to answer some of the common fighter questions we get asked here at **FIGHT!**





### What is your opinion regarding headgear versus no headgear?

This issue's questions are two of the most controversial questions in the sport today.

There is a presumption that helmets make the sport safer and that is why they are compulsory in the amateurs. This is not the case. This was discussed at length at the WBC Convention on boxing injuries in Aruba. In reality, the reason for headgear in the amateurs is more political — it's to distinguish themselves from the pros,

and because in some countries, such as England, where the British Medical Association is very active in its calls to ban boxing, it is thought that the use of headgear is more acceptable.

Many people believe that more protective gear means a safer sport. Gridiron proves this wrong. There have also been some studies on the effects of bicycle helmets and road safety that show they have almost no direct effect on head injuries.

Wearing headgear in fighting does reduce cuts and I would recommend it for a fighter in the fortnight before a fight just to prevent being cut.

The problems with headgear are:

- It creates a false sense of confidence. Fighters wear the blow instead of blocking or weaving.
- It makes the head target bigger so it is harder to weave out of the way of a shot.
- It makes the head target heavier and therefore slower to move to weave; therefore people do not bother to move the head and become lazy. This becomes a habit.
- Because the head target is larger and slower to move, it becomes an easy scoring option. This has meant that amateur boxing has now become dominated by headshots and the art of the

body shot has been lost, which has made head trauma more common in boxing and I think has made boxing less interesting, as I am a big fan of the body shot.

- Headgear reduces vision. You can 'close your eyes' and wear the blow.
- Headgear can cause overheating of the head, which contributes to dehydration and reduced mental clarity.

One of my favourite sayings is "Pad the weapon and not the target." I believe that the key issue is design of boxing gloves. There should be excellent padding across the knuckles. Unfortunately, gloves are rated according to their weight. There is a presumption that heavier gloves have more padding on the knuckles. This is often just plain wrong, especially with older gloves, which are sometimes really heavy and have no knuckle protection. I spar with 10oz gloves with excellent knuckle protection, and I like my partners to do the same. This encourages fast, quick shots without the wind-up and follow through.

The thing that causes the most brain damage is repeated blows rather than an occasional sharp blow. I think the best way to really shake the head up is to put headgear on and then pound that head repeatedly with 16oz gloves.





**What is your opinion on the state of drug testing in our sport and what direction should we be heading?**

Well, I am a bit biased when it comes to drug testing because I am a director of Suretest, which supplies drug testing cups for many sporting events, including motorbike races and world title boxing and kickboxing.

The obvious advantage of testing is that we can promote the sport as safer and cleaner and more politically correct. I think it is important for fighter safety that they are not using stimulant drugs that impair judgment. This is for the safety of both fighters.

There are problems with drug testing. The main one is cost. There is no way that we could afford to test for every drug for every fighter. Because we can only test for some drugs, the effect of testing means that we will only catch out the ignorant and poor drug users. Pro athletes with expensive sports scientists behind them can always get around the tests.

The biggest problem with drug testing is that the very existence of the testing program implies that fighters have an unfair advantage if they are using drugs and I am not sure that that is the case. Some young people will think that if we test for drugs,

they must work and therefore they will try them out because they'll do anything to win.

I think that we need a drug education campaign in conjunction with testing to make it quite clear that we test to ensure fighter safety and that drugs do not give the fighter an advantage. Most good fighters do not use drugs. They are fit, they train hard and they have good skills. Many of the fighters who use drugs are lazy and they lose.



PAUL THATCHER

A problem with drug testing can also be seen in the Soliman/Sturm controversy where Sam Soliman was vilified because the Germans alleged that they had detected a trace amount of methylsynephrine in Sam's urine. Methylsynephrine is also known as citrus extract and it is present in many over-the-counter nutritional supplements. This is clearly the case of drug testing gone mad. Drug testing should be first about fighter safety. Secondly to prevent unfair cheating, but as I said above, I am not sure that we can achieve this. Drug testing has gone mad when it comes down to testing for obscure supplements that you can get in health food shops and when it gets to an AFL-type situation where even the experts are arguing about which supplements are legal and which are not. **1**



**DR PETER LEWIS**

Dr Lewis is internationally recognised as a medical authority in the martial arts field. He has also been studying and teaching martial arts for almost 40 years.

Dr Lewis is best known as a ringside physician. He is often seen on televised shows in many countries. He has worked in 28 cities internationally, 22 of these on world title-standard events. He has performed every ringside role, including doctor, referee, judge, rules coordinator, timekeeper, commentator, ringside announcer, matchmaker, trainer, cornerman, cutsman and has competed in karate, taekwondo and kung fu. He has had the pleasure and honour of looking after some of the most important fights and fighters in history.

Dr Lewis is also well known as an international lecturer and writer on martial arts medicine. He has consulted at ReCreation Medical Centre for almost 30 years.

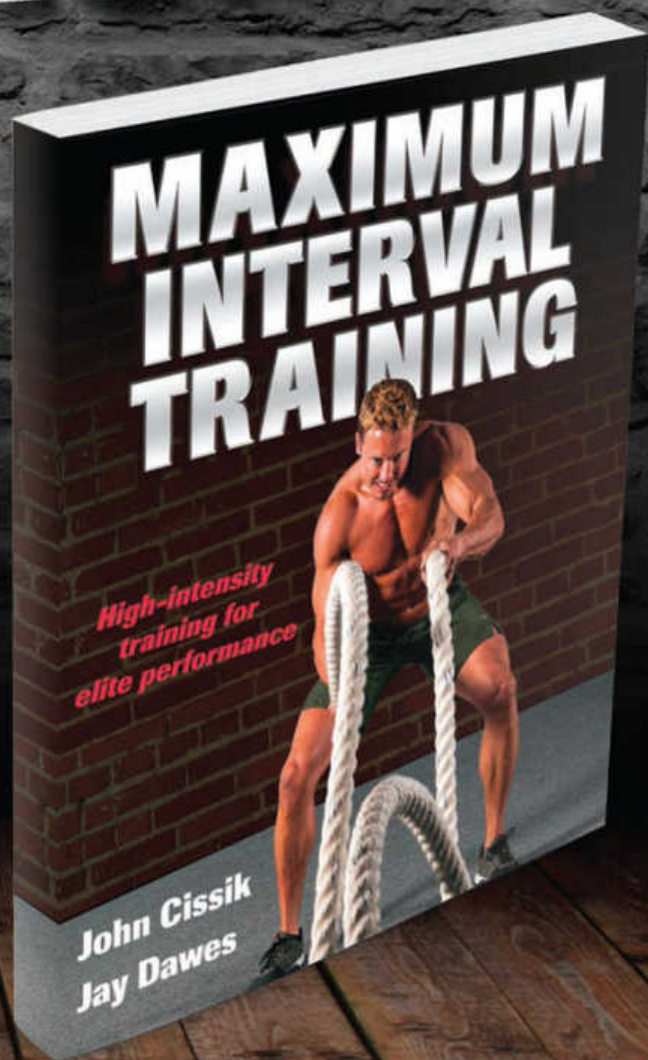
He also has a clinic at Malvern Martial Arts, which is especially for martial artists. Dr Lewis works with a team including a nurse, physio, chiro, podiatrist, psychologist, exercise physiologist, dietitian and masseurs who all have extensive experience in martial arts.

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## *Paige VanZant*

*At just 21 years of age, Paige VanZant has had a lot to hold on her young shoulders. Already a poster child for the UFC and Reebok, the US fighter faced a bright spotlight heading into her main event match against Rose Namajunas. Following her defeat VanZant was humble at the post-press conference:*

*"I definitely have the heart, I have the aggression. I don't have the technique yet and I think everyone has known that. I got outclassed in every way. So just get back with my team and game plan and work on my technique. ...I just wasn't prepared for that fight. I'm just new, ya know? I've got a lot to learn. Just working with my team. I'm trying not to cry, guys."*

**What were your impressions of Sage Northcutt when you met him at UFC 192?**

It was great to meet him. I met him right after he stepped off the scales to weigh in. Super nice, very well spoken. I think he's got a very bright future, and that's going to be exciting to watch. We're both young, we're new generation and the new breed. It's awesome to see another young person like myself being successful in this sport.

**What do you think of people comparing you two to 'Ken and Barbie'?**

Yeah, you know I'm definitely happy about the comparison. It's not anything negative. We're both young and that's just the way it is. We're young in a sport that is something that is really an honour to be a part of, especially being in the UFC at this age. It's a huge accomplishment. So it's all great comparisons, and I'm excited that we get to fight on the same card together. I think it's a great thing, and we'll be able to show off as these young kids. We're definitely coming to make a statement.

**Was it difficult to be a target for having things like an exclusive Reebok contract so early in your career?**

I wanna say it wasn't hard, but it was. I'm somebody who...I do take what people say to heart, and it was hard at first, but then I have to look at it like, I have so many blessings in my life. There's no way I should look at anything like this with a negative heart or with a negative emotion behind it.

So I just think about how blessed I am, and how hard — I know how hard I've worked, and I know what I've sacrificed, and I've had a very, very hard road to get to the UFC. So I know I deserve every second and every opportunity I'm getting, and I'm just going to continue to win fights and make a great statement for these companies. I am very blessed to be a part of Reebok and I just want to continue to be a good representative of their company, and for all the companies I work with moving forward.

**How hard has it been dealing with people's criticism that you are getting further in your career because of your looks?**

Yeah, it is a funny question and it's obviously one that I've gotten a lot, and something so many people are curious about. But I think people just have to remember that this is still an entertainment industry. It's all about ticket sales and it's about how many people you can bring to the fights, and how many sales you can get. And in reality, if I lose my fights, none of it matters. It doesn't matter if people think I'm good looking, it doesn't matter if I have this drawcard behind me. If I lose my fights, I'm gonna lose all of that. So for me, the pressure is still high. The pressure is still on to win fights and I'm gonna continue to do that.

**You mentioned you had a very hard road to the UFC, can you tell us more about that?**

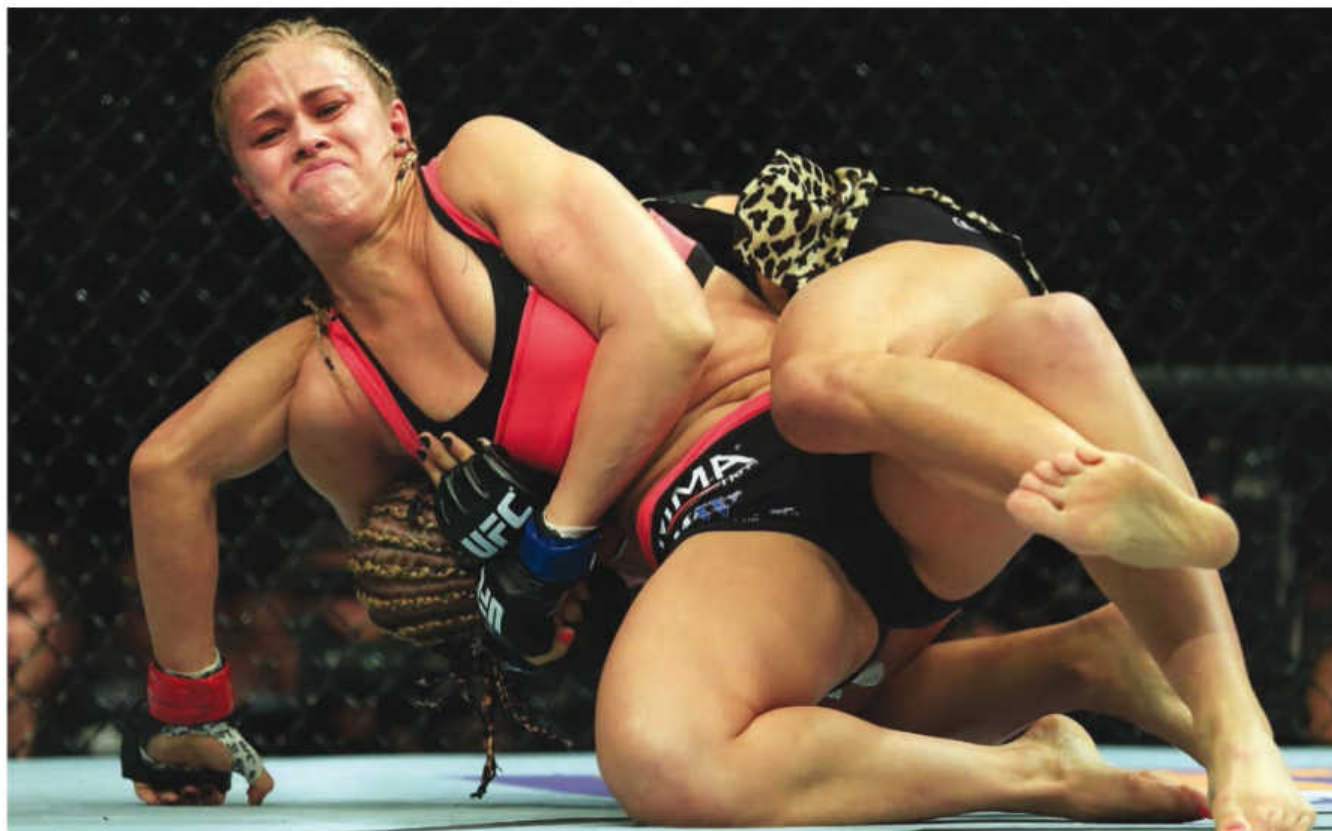
Just struggles here and there. And I don't want a sob story or anything, but of course I struggled. I gave up a lot. I made a lot of sacrifices to get where I am, and I'm just real happy that I get to be a part of the UFC, I get to be a part of Reebok and I'm definitely on a stage that I want to be on.

I always knew from a young age that I was meant for big things. I was meant



***"I'm somebody who...I do take what people say to heart, and it was hard at first, but then I have to look at it like, I have so many blessings in my life."***





to be successful and now I'm finally able — everyone's like, "Oh, you're so young. How do you deal with it?" For me, it's like it's finally happening. It took so long for me to be on this stage and to be in front of an audience. I really am ready to perform.

The only hard thing is, you know, I am young and I'm making big decisions that affect my entire life. So I moved to Vegas when I was 18, so I just left my pad, I left everything behind, I left my friends behind. But I mean, it all happened for the best — obviously, because I'm in the UFC now.

It really showed me who my closest friends were. My best friends are still there, they go to every fight they can make, and they're there for me every second of every day if I need them. And we may not be in the same state, but we still are very supportive of each other. And I definitely had to leave some family. Luckily, now I'm living in Sacramento, which is a lot closer to my friends and family. So I see them on the weekends, or after my fights I make sure I go down to Reno and hang out with family for a while.

### Obviously, Rose was a tougher test than Joanne...

I do think Joanne and Rose bring different things to the table. Obviously,

we do know Rose beat Joanne on *The Ultimate Fighter*. I think they both have their things that make them good fighters. I will say I think Rose has a more extensive skill set, as far as standup. On the ground she has a more extensive skill set. I [was] just excited to fight someone that's ranked higher than me.




### People thought maybe you were being groomed by the UFC or given opponents that you're expected to beat?

I think that anyone that knows anything about the strawweight division knows there's only 30 athletes. So once you're in the top 15, it's very selective who you have fights with. So that's why when we looked at a new opponent with Joanne, we had to find someone who either hadn't just fought, or didn't have a fight lined up already. That's very hard. Rose just fought. So it's awesome that she stepped up. There isn't enough girls in the division. But you have to take the fight that you're offered, and so I'm gonna take every single fight the UFC offers me.

### How much did you change your training and game plan for Rose?

Obviously, I'm gonna make little adjustments here and there. My training partners are going to change their style a little bit to be a little bit more like her.

### What's next after this fight?

We're going to have to see. I'll take whatever fights the UFC throws at me. 

# Growing Australia's MMA Future

BY ZACH BROADHURST

For a country with such a small population, given its massive size, Australia has always punched above its weight when it comes to sport – and MMA is no different. Many future stars and talented Aussie veterans call the UFC home while others continue to develop their game here and in promotions around the world. The International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF) and their Australian affiliate – the IMMAFA – is an organisation determined for MMA to grow and flourish on home soil so we can continue to watch our Aussie heroes battle it out on the sports biggest stages. *Fight!* spoke to IMMAFA president Joe Minehan about his plan to continue to make the sport safer, his involvement with the 2016 Arnold Classic and his desire to make Australia a world force in MMA.

**For those who may not have heard of IMMAF, what is it and what is the mission behind it?**

The purpose of International Mixed Martial Arts Federation is to further the development and recognition of the sport of mixed martial arts, enabling international competition through the organisation of national MMA federations around the world.

The IMMAFA is the non-profit organisation in Australia affiliated with the international body, and we are working to the same goals.

**What do you think of the standard and state of Australian MMA at the moment?**

I was fortunate to recently attend a novice MMA event held by Adrenaline MMA in Cheltenham and was very impressed with the level.

There was a high level of skill and commitment, great strikes and thoughtful grappling. And importantly the event was held in an atmosphere of mutual support and great sportsmanship.

I made the statement on the day that I saw a number of competitors that would not have been out of place at the 2015 World Amateur Championships. I think that the time is now for us as the IMMAFA to help grow the grass roots and provide a non-profit organisation and structure for a safer sport for those that choose to participate. Australia has always been a country that, given our population and remoteness, has always punched above our weight. MMA will be no different; we have the potential to develop and produce world champions.



### How do you think IMMAF can continue to grow the sport here in Australia?

IMMAFA will continue to provide the structure, training and support to gyms and fighters to create an amateur pathway for competitors and officials to progress to the professional ranks — if that is what they choose. And for those who choose not to progress into professional competition, we will provide a safer sport for them to participate in for health and fitness.

### We see the effect that having massive events like UFC 193 has on the fan base of MMA here in Australia. What effect do you think events like UFC 193 and the UFC Fight Night earlier this year in Adelaide have on the growth of participation in the sport Down Under?

The sport has its own momentum, but having the UFC show increases the growth exponentially. The buzz around UFC 193 was phenomenal and having the top two bouts with female competitors only added to the spectacle. It was also great to see a wide cross section of the community attend, with celebrities, young, old, male and female.

### We see a lot of negative press on MMA here in Australia, especially around UFC 193. Does this negative press have any effect in participation in MMA here in Australia — especially when it comes to getting younger people involved?

There doesn't appear to have been any impact on participation at this stage; however, we as an organisation need to provide a safe environment so that the growth we are experiencing turns into long-term participants.

The celebrity of the sport will attract a lot of people to try it, but if it is not well organised, or unsafe, the new members will go elsewhere.

### How does the IMMAF go about battling negative press?

The rules of the IMMAFA exclude the use of elbows and forearms and some of the more dangerous techniques. We are working toward making a safer sport for amateurs, while not taking away the core of MMA.

There are always sections of the community that like to criticise. We will focus on the positive aspects, such as the discipline and respect involved in martial arts, the athleticism of the participants and also the fact that in this age of increasing obesity, it is positive for people to be active in any way possible.

### How did IMMAF become involved with the UFC?

Dana White has voiced the UFC's support of the IMMAF. He recognises that given MMA's explosion across the world, nations need structure and organisations that have the best interest of the sport of MMA, and all participants, at the heart of their mission.

In the future, competitors will have an opportunity to develop their skills in a structured amateur environment. We will create an opportunity for them to build a credible career while developing their skills so that if they decide to turn professional they are truly prepared to protect themselves — as well as compete at the highest level.

We will provide the grassroots organisation and pathway for this to occur. There will be opportunities for officials to build skills in refereeing, scoring and other areas at an amateur level before progressing as well.

### What support have the UFC given you and what does their association mean to you?

The UFC has provided both financial and mentoring support for the IMMAFA. The IMMAF World Championships during UFC Fight Week also gives our amateur competitors the opportunity to display their skills on a large scale.

### How did you become involved with the Arnold?

I heard of the Arnold Classic from a prominent promoter in Queensland and saw this as a potential long-term relationship that would benefit the Arnold, and provide a platform to showcase the talent of amateur MMA competitors in Australia.

Silvio Morelli had a similar vision and has helped immensely in bringing the IMMAFA to the Arnold Classic.

### How can people sign up to compete in MMA at the 2016 Arnold?

We expect to have approximately 100 to 150 competitors across the novice and advanced categories; however, we are happy to exceed this number. The more competitors, the better the competition and the more experience gained by each individual.

We intend to introduce an age division from 18 to 21 years. The IMMAF is scheduling a world championship for this age category in 2017.

### What are the requirements for a fighter to qualify and be eligible to compete in MMA at the Arnold?

The requirements are relatively simple. To be eligible a competitor must:

- Be a genuine amateur athlete.
- Be affiliated with an appropriate club.
- Be physically able to compete.

There will be Novice and Advanced categories in the eight standard weight divisions from flyweight to heavyweight — strawweight and super heavyweight may be added depending on nominations.

There are five women's weight divisions from flyweight to welterweight and additional divisions may be added subject to nominations.

### What's on offer to each of the divisional champions?

Exclusive Arnold Classic medals will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place getters at this iconic event.

The Arnold Classic is also doubling as the inaugural IMMAFA Australian Championships and Australian Team selections. The winners of the advanced section will automatically have reserved their place in the Australian team to compete at the IMMAF World Championships in Las Vegas in July 2016.

### Outside of the 2016 Arnold, what does IMMAF have scheduled for next year?

The Arnold Classic is the highlight of our Australian calendar for 2016, but this is followed by the IMMAFA Queensland Open on Sunday 15 May in Brisbane, held at the Eatons Hill Hotel Grand Ballroom.

The IMMAF World Championships in Las Vegas during UFC Fight Week are held in July 2016. 





# IN THE HANDS





# International MMA judge Ben Cartlidge

**“Never leave it in the hands of the judges” is the catch-cry that has become a staple of many mixed martial arts discussions. This issue we go inside the mind of a man who has the unenviable job of making the toughest calls in combat sports.**

BY JARROD BOYLE



**B**en Cartlidge understands judging. That assertion is backed up by the largest MMA organisations worldwide: Cage Warriors in the UK, KSW in Poland and, of course, the mighty UFC. As enormous as the fanbase of MMA has become, an understanding of its intricacies has not developed in proportion to its growth.

Like many fans, Cartlidge's interest grew from an adolescent fascination.

“My best friend and I watched a lot of kung fu movies; early Jet Li and Jackie Chan. One day, we went to a video shop and discovered UFC 2. The first fight was Royce Gracie against a Japanese karate guy.”

The boys were about to witness the ultimate confrontation between fantasy and reality.

“The karate guy started off with kata. I thought, ‘He’s going to do a dragon punch!’ Gracie took him down immediately. It mystified me. I watched it on and off; watching the sport grow, developing an understanding. I was enthralled by it.”

His own practice of martial arts was a crucial part of that understanding.

“I did various things as a kid; Shotokan karate for three or four years. Once I got into my teens, I stopped, and playing video games and BMX bikes took over. Then, in my early twenties, I got back into Shotokan. In 2005, I said to this friend I was training with, ‘What are we doing? This is boring’.”

Around about that time, *The Ultimate Fighter* was making its way onto English television screens.

“Season three featured the first British guys: Ross Pointon, Michael Bisping. We discovered that Ross didn’t live far away, so we went to his gym. He

was running a no-gi submission class. We did it and we were hooked. Both of us went for years.

“I got more involved with different shows in different locations. I’ve got a friend who owns a fitness gym, he’s a BJJ Blue-belt. I go down there and do some training. Hit the pads; roll a bit. It’s good because I don’t have to worry about affiliations.”

That ongoing interest in participation has fostered a deeper understanding.

“I like to sit and watch instructionals. You realise that people are still coming up with new techniques. You also see people reintroducing old techniques. You can see how they fall into consciousness, like when Anderson Silva front-kicked Vitor Belfort at UFC 126.”

Cartlidge demonstrates an encyclopedic knowledge of fights and fighters, which is indicative of his breadth of knowledge.

“After that, there was a wave of front-kick knockouts. Lyoto Machida caught Randy Couture at UFC129 with a crane kick. His arms were in the same position as Daniel-san’s [in *The Karate Kid*]. Like Miyagi says, ‘If done properly, no can defend.’ That’s advice for life, to be honest.”

Cartlidge’s eye for detail saw him predisposed toward something special.

“I tried a few different roles within MMA events. I did some work as a commentator. It was interesting, but I didn’t find it challenging. I was also writing a little bit. I did press. Then, when I began judging, I got a sense that this was what I’d be best at. It was the thing I enjoyed the most. That was in 2010, doing regional shows in the UK.”

There was a need for solid, insightful judging of MMA at a grass-roots level.

NIGEL BURGESS



Darren Till and Nicolas Dalby raise their hands as the judges give them a controversial draw in their welterweight fight during the UFC in Dublin



"Shows in the UK...a lot of promoters, judging is the first area they cut corners. The promoter will splurge on five ring girls and get his mates judging. The priorities are in the wrong order. These are professional fighters; this is their opportunity to make a living. If you're not taking it seriously, you shouldn't be doing it. It's people's lives. You have to take it seriously."

"Taking it seriously" means exactly the same thing for a judge as it does for a fighter: you need to know your craft and then invest the time to practice it.

"You need to know the criteria inside and out; know what you're looking for," says Cartlidge. "There are millions of fights on-line. Go to YouTube and find what you want. Then, get yourself a pen and paper and try to judge it.

"Look at KSW, UFC, or Cage Warriors and then look up the decisions recorded on the 'MMA Decisions' website and cross reference your score against the judges'. Then, look at the criteria to check how you arrived at your answers."

Just like fighting, experience is the most important factor and just as the resume of an elite fighter will record the quality of the shows he has been included on, so too does an elite judge.

"I still do UK shows; it was through them that I got the experience that anybody needs. At the start of 2012, I was called by [UK promotion] Cage Warriors. I started with their crazy international schedule, but I was ready for it because I'd put the time in; I'd spent time practising the craft.

"Marc Goddard says about the UFC, or any big show, that 'You graduate to,

not from, the UFC'. You have to have your skills in place. You don't want to be learning on the job on a massive scale."

Having the skills in place is about knowing the criteria and understanding them in the context of a real fight as it is unfolding.

"The system is what's called a '10-point must', which is derived from boxing. Somebody must be awarded 10 points in the round before deductions for fouls.

"They kept the same point system for MMA, but the criteria needed to be adapted to take in grappling. That's where it gets interesting. Each criteria has separate weighting depending on how prevalent it is in a round."

The four criteria are defined as: effective striking, grappling, Octagon or cage control and effective aggression.



*JUST LIKE FIGHTING, EXPERIENCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR AND JUST AS THE RESUME OF AN ELITE FIGHTER WILL RECORD THE QUALITY OF THE SHOWS HE HAS BEEN INCLUDED ON, SO TOO DOES AN ELITE JUDGE.*



GETTY IMAGES

Ben Cartlidge  
at another day  
in the office

DOLLY CLEW

"Striking and grappling are very much at the core of MMA judging. If you look at the ABC Unified Rules, you'll find that the sections describing striking and grappling are quite lengthy, whereas the definitions for effective aggression and cage control are quite small.

"Effective grappling is defined as the number of successful executions of a legal takedown, reversal or submission attempt. Of striking and grappling, your judgment of the importance of each is weighted as to the makeup of the round.

"A judge presiding over a round which features four and a half minutes of grappling and wrestling transitions and 30 seconds of standup will weight the round accordingly when awarding the final score.

"Effective aggression and cage control are very useful criteria because in rounds

that are close, they give a differential point, rather like the idea of getting an 'advantage point' in competitive jiu-jitsu.

"You get standard point denominations in BJJ, like a lot of sports, but there are certain techniques that you can do that don't score points but you'll get an advantage. If nobody scores any points or the score is tied, an advantage point is a way of picking out a winner. Aggression and cage control are like that in a lot of respects.

"Cage control is simply dictating the pace, place and position of the fight. Place is more specific, like up against the cage, for example. 'Position' might mean a certain position in the clinch or, more logically, on the ground. Effective aggression is moving forward and scoring legal strikes or attacking from the guard with submissions."

Most controversy about decisions emerges in regard to striking, particularly from misconceptions related to damage.

"Damage is a funny one," says Cartlidge. "Facial damage or bruising is really a byproduct of effective striking. The problem with damage as an indicator is that it isn't a level playing field. There are genetic advantages you can't legislate for. If a fighter has had more fights than someone else and has more scar tissue, they're more likely to cut up."

The issue of damage becomes more complex the longer it is discussed.

"The other thing is, different skin tones don't show bruising or blood. 'Damage' is something we try and move away from. It's not fair; not objective. 'Effective' means that the fighter is judged on legal strikes that land.

"If a guy wins a fight with some takedowns and control, but gets a black eye and [sheds some] blood, people say, 'Look at his face, how can he have won that?' The thing is, you're judging each individual round."

While the 10-point must has adequately served the sport of boxing, it is yet to be clearly understood by most spectators in its MMA incarnation.

"The thing about the ten-point must [is there are a] lot of misinterpretations. The system we have is certainly fit for the purpose; it's more a case that some people don't understand what judges are looking for, and that's the most common misconception about decisions."

Cartlidge's acumen and experience have led to his employment in the world's largest MMA organisations.

"I'd been judging with Cage Warriors in 2012. Near the end of that year, I ended up working an event with the UFC. They originally got me in to 'shadow judge', which is the process for anyone who starts. You score, but your cards are assessed after the event as a competence check."

BJ Penn vs Frankie Edgar at UFC 112 provided a mixed bag of judges results



GETTY IMAGES

Evidently, the shadow judging was successful because Cartlidge soon received a call to take on greater responsibility.

"They got in touch with me and discussed opportunities going forward. It's a dream come true. It's always super-exciting [to judge a UFC show]. It's a real honour. So far, I've worked in Brazil, Japan, Singapore, Macau, and quite a few in Europe as well."

Cage Warriors has also depended on his services for a number of its international shows.

"I've done Cage Warriors shows in the Middle East; Jordan, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Bahrain. I even did one in Chechnya. I got sent an article about how to survive in Russia by a friend of mine; it said you should grow a beard so you look less like a tourist and don't get kidnapped. I've still got the beard. It must have worked; I'm still here."

Cartlidge's resume also includes stints working on the largest mixed martial arts promotion in Europe, KSW.

"They sent me a message inviting me to do KSW29 last year, in December. I've worked with them ever since."

Cartlidge reserves a significant compliment for the KSW organisation.

"It's straight out of Japan; real Pride era. They embrace the entertainment element. There's a gala quality to their presentation and production."

That said, there's no confusion where Cartlidge's ultimate allegiance lies.

"UFC will always be the biggest show in the world. They've got that brand recognition that has become bigger than the sport. They've made it more acceptable; more accessible. It's developed at an astronomical rate."


"If you told me [when I was] 16, 17 years of age that this [sport] would be filling arenas all over the world, I wouldn't have believed you. Originally, it was marketed as a blood sport. Now, it's a legitimate sport, screening on a major US network, syndicated all over the world."

The recent show held at Etihad Stadium, UFC193, is testament to this.

"It was unfathomable that the UFC could put on an event headlined by two female title fights and pull that sort of crowd. As an organisation, they are prepared to push boundaries and give opportunities. The show itself was well attended and received an excellent reception. People will be talking about the fights on that card for decades."

Naturally, the main event is what I wanted to talk about.

"People will talk about [Rousey and Holm] for 20 years. It was one of the most significant events in the sport. How it happened; how high profile it was. The UFC is committed to putting [those shows] on. They are committed to bringing shows of that size all over the world."

It follows that judging must be of similar standard. It is important that fans become familiar enough with the criteria to follow that development and, more importantly, participate in it to maximise their enjoyment of the sport. 

**The judging criteria for MMA are available at:**

[ufc.com/discover/sport/rules-and-regulations#14](http://ufc.com/discover/sport/rules-and-regulations#14)

and [abcboxing.com/Unified\\_Rules\\_of\\_MMA\\_Judging\\_Criteria.pdf](http://abcboxing.com/Unified_Rules_of_MMA_Judging_Criteria.pdf)

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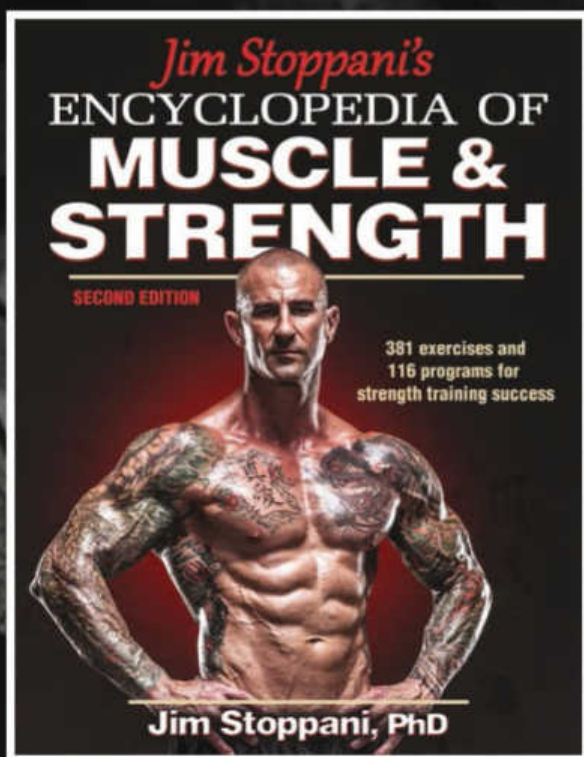
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RICH FRANKLIN

# NO REGRETS







# Rich Franklin

**Despite not competing in the UFC Octagon for almost three years, on 28 September 2015, MMA legend Rich Franklin officially retired from competition, citing the fact that his body had slowed down. But in a career that saw him become the UFC's middleweight champion, he is content with his achievements even though he could never reclaim that UFC gold.**

BY SUBMISSION RADIO // PHOTOS BY GETTY

## **What kind of response have you gotten from fans since retiring?**

It's kind of a mixed response I guess. You have some fans who are like, "Oh no. Rich, seriously I wanted to see you fight one more time." And then you have a bunch of other fans that, because it's been a while since I fought, they're kind of like, "Yeah we kind of figured that would happen." So it was a bit of both on both sides.

## **How close did you come to fighting again?**

Well, I'd say towards the end, before I actually announced my retirement, there were probably several months there, a good bulk of 2015, where I was really just kind of considering the pros and cons of taking another fight. Just with the work I'm doing with ONE Championship; I'm in Singapore right now and I'm over here frequently, and it's difficult for me to put a good training camp together for a fight.

I train every day still, but there's a difference between that and prepping for a fight. So as this year kind of went on, it was becoming more and more apparent to me with the time I've been out of the cage. And then I turned 41 in October and it just seemed like the right time to pull the trigger. But up until that, there was actually one occasion where I started actually prepping to begin a camp and all that kind of stuff. And it hadn't gotten to the point when I was selecting anybody for a fight or talked to the UFC or anything, but there was a time when I was ready to pull the trigger. That was probably say a year, year-and-a-half ago now.



**How much of a factor was the job with ONE Championship in your retirement? Do you think you'd have had the last fight if you weren't working so much?**

For sure. If I wasn't basically heading out of the country every other month and doing the stuff that I do over here, then yeah. But you start looking at things — like I have a good job, and it's a decent paying job too. And then you start thinking about taking another fight, and the fact that I'm out of title contention. So it's just one more fight for the fans to fulfil my contract. Then you start looking at whether the money that I'm gonna make is actually worth the damage that my body is going to incur

preparing for the fight and during the fight. It's interesting how a 40-year-old fighter thinks versus how a 25-year-old fighter thinks.

**Can anything be done to help prevent injuries in training?**

No, no. Not really. More often than not, a fighter is going into a fight with some sort of nagging injury. I'll give you a perfect example. When I was prepping for Chuck [Liddell], I was drilling, I was in a guy's guard and we were just doing a simple drill. Just some movement drills where we were tipping each other bases. He kinda scissor-kicked his legs on my waist and my knee and kinda knocked me off balance. And

**“MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, A FIGHTER IS GOING INTO A FIGHT WITH SOME SORT OF NAGGING INJURY.”**







**“EVERY TIME I GO TO A JIU-JITSU SCHOOL TODAY, IT’S LIKE I’M FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE.”**

gauge myself against him. If I can tap him out, then clearly I can probably be a UFC champ too.” Like that’s people’s thinking or something.

**A lot has changed when it comes to cutting weight from when you first started fighting. Do you think the weigh-in system for MMA can still be improved?**

It’s really simple, just do same-day weigh-ins and restrictions on how many pounds you’re allowed to gain before the fight. Because I hate sitting around at weigh-ins, sitting there with my coconut water and my peanut butter and my banana sandwiches, waiting to step on the scale, being miserable and cutting weight and sitting in the saunas. I choose to do sauna work. It’s effective for my body, and there are other methods. It’s not the only way to do it. I walk around at about 96 kg, so about 210 pounds. And I’m 210, 212, somewhere around there. So for me, I have to do a little bit of work to get to the point where I basically want to keep my cut to around 20 pounds (9 kg).

So I want to be around 205 to make 185. But you know, if I was just fighting 205, I have basically like a five-pound cut to get there. And it’s not a difficult thing to do. It’s just making sure that I’m on weight for that day; like tailoring my diet leading up to the fight or whatever. And so, yeah, you would hear me talk about that kind of stuff. But for whatever, the atmosphere, it’s always been that way in boxing and wrestling, and now MMA. It’s just the culture that’s been designed in combative sports.

**Do you see any problems with same-day weigh-ins and fighters just cutting the weight regardless and not rehydrating?**

when I went to place my hand on the mat to balance myself, my thumb got folded underneath me. I tore the ulnar collateral ligament in my thumb, UCL.

I couldn’t make the ‘OK’ symbol with my thumb and index finger, like ‘OK’. I couldn’t even move my finger and thumb like that. And so I went to see a hand specialist, and they were recommending that I get hand surgery on this ligament and they said that I probably wouldn’t have the strength in my thumb to ever grab hold of a wrist and keep that strength. And this happened probably, I don’t know, somewhere between two and three weeks outside of the fight. I finished part of my camp wearing a hand brace that kept my thumb locked in place. So

I was having trouble throwing punches and all this kind of stuff, and I actually thought about pulling out of that fight, but I went ahead and took that fight.

**Are you able to go to BJJ schools without people wanting to test themselves against you?**

Oh Lord! Look, you’re talking about the beginning of my career; let me tell you something. Every time I go to a jiu-jitsu school today, it’s like I’m fighting for my life. Like, half the time I leave a jiu-jitsu school, I feel like I should have gotten paid for doing that, because I leave there just as sore as I did when I actually fought in the cage. Every time I go to a school, it’s like, “Oh, Rich Franklin’s here. He was a UFC champ. Let me

It may take a young athlete to figure out how stupid of an idea that is, because flat out, your body, it just cannot perform. You can't process the liquids that fast.

**Do you wish you fought anyone that you didn't get a chance to? Do you regret never avenging the Anderson Silva loss?**

I think one person I wish I could have fought before I retired maybe is Jim Carrey, because we look so much alike. I would imagine that if that guy did jiu-jitsu, he would have this amazing rubber guard and he'd get you laughing, and then next thing you know you're getting choked out.

But as far as avenging the Anderson loss, this kind of goes back to the mentality I have about losses. Like, you could never take that back. And in my first fight with Anderson, we made some huge mental errors and a bit of that was arrogance on my end. Honestly, I thought because I was so much bigger and more muscular than Anderson, I really didn't think I would have a problem with his clinch, and we kind of neglected working the clinch. Which showed in the first fight.

And then of course we made adjustments in the second fight. And you can look at the two fights; I was actually — I believe — winning the first round until I got clipped at the end of that round. And against a fighter like Anderson, when you walk out in the second round and you can see two of him — just one of him is difficult enough to deal with. But with that said, I actually had a chance to kind of avenge that loss. I got a second shot at fighting him and I came up short again. So nah, no regrets there. He's a great fighter and a great champion, and he'll go down as one of the greatest champions to ever step in the cage.


**What are your thoughts on Vitor Belfort pulling out of *The MMA Hour* and setting rules for media? Is he going about his career the right way from a PR perspective?**

I don't know. Like, you're asking me a question now that I'm not really privy to all the information in his camp as far as how his PR wants to handle things. But it's just never the way that I've handled doing interviews and stuff like that. I mean, look, you can sit and listen to this interview with me and I'm pretty candid. I don't have rehearsed answers or rehearsed questions. Really,



it's whatever we want to talk about. And I think that's always been, I think that's been a draw of the fans to me. When you're listening to the interview, you know you're getting the real me. And so that's the approach I like to take.

But quite frankly, Vitor may take a different approach. At the end of the day, what really matters is that you're a fighter. And if you're winning fights, that's all that matters. I'm not saying

that he's being a prick in his interview or anything, but you can be a prick in your interviews, you can be whoever you want to be. And as long as you're winning the fight, it doesn't matter. So look, I know Vitor, and Vitor's a good guy, good Christian guy. I know him as a person, and so however they've decided to handle this in their camp is strategically I guess the best way to do things — at least they think. 



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# YOU CAN'T SILENCE **THE** TRUTH

Tim Kennedy



**Tim Kennedy has been sitting on the sidelines since his controversial loss to Yoel Romero at UFC 178, uneasy with the way the UFC have handled the fighters in the wake of the Reebok deal. But there is one way to get him back in the Octagon, let him punish ‘cheaters’ Anderson Silva and Vitor Belfort.**

BY SUBMISSION RADIO // PHOTOS BY GETTY

**Could Johnny Hendricks lure you back to fight again now that it looks like he may be in the middleweight division?**

That'd be a fun one. You think he'd make 185 pounds? When he was getting ready to cut to 170, he didn't even make it past, like 187, right? Like, he was cutting and he was at 187, and they were like, "Whoa, you can't cut anymore, bro. You're getting sick." So, I think 185 might be a stretch for him. There are a lot of other guys in the division that I'd be more excited to fight, to include Anderson Silva, who will be coming off suspension for performance-enhancing drugs. Vitor Belfort or Dan Henderson — that'd be a fun fight. You know, against two legends. Both of them love their TRT. Lyoto Machida, Nick Diaz. Those are some fun, fun fights. Johnny Hendricks would be a harder fight than all four of those, but it would be a fight that I would be excited for, regardless.

**Why do you think Johnny Hendricks would be a harder fight than Vitor, Henderson, Anderson Silva and Machida?**

I think he's better. I mean, of all those guys that I just listed, I think Johnny Hendricks is better than most of them. Especially stylistically for me, you know, two wrestlers with heavy hands. Stylistically it's...again, especially compared to Vitor Belfort or Anderson Silva. Both of which, I think would be very easy fights for me. Style-wise, Johnny is a little bit more difficult.

**What was your reaction to Dan Henderson saying he doesn't think you and him would make an exciting fight for the fans?**

Yeah, I'm a bad match-up for Dan [laughs]. You know, let's just get down to it. It's not 'stylistically'. You know, he's not going to take me down. His wrestling's not good enough to stop my takedowns, and fundamentally

**“You know, he’s not going to take me down. His wrestling’s not good enough to stop my takedowns, and fundamentally I’m a better striker than he is.”**



I'm a better striker than he is. So he really has one shot and that's going to be his big right hand — 'H-Bomb'. So that's getting slower, as he is weaker with his age, as his chin is. We're kind of both like 'Go America' type guys. So that's not cool. Two America-type guys fighting. And so I think the foundation for what he was saying was: 'I don't want to fight Tim because it's a bad matchup for me. I don't know how I'm gonna beat him, besides maybe landing a lucky punch.'

**What are your thoughts on the controversy around Vitor apparently testing positive for high levels of testosterone, leading into UFC 152, and being allowed to fight?**

Oh, he's a cheater. He's always been a cheater. He's been cheating since he was 19 years old. In fact, I think he failed his first steroid test when he was like 20 or something. That's crazy. And now he's old as hell, and he's still cheating. I don't know why people are acting surprised. I think the biggest story of this is that the UFC potentially covered this up for him to go ahead and fight in the main event fight — that's a tragedy.

There's no surprise that Vitor Belfort's cheating. He's always been cheating.

There's no surprise there. The guy's been cheating for forever. So, all you guys that love Vitor Belfort, 'cause he has all these fantastic, fun-to-watch knockouts. Guess what? He's a cheater. Nothing's ever changed about him. You've seen some things, maybe, evolve in this game slightly. The only thing that's stayed true is he's always cheated. I don't know. No surprise there, besides the UFC maybe covering it up.

**Have you had any backlash from Dana White or the UFC about your comments against Reebok?**

What are you going to say to me? Like, if I say, "Hey, this how much I made in my last fight in sponsorship money. Here's how much I made in my last Strikeforce fight with sponsorship money. Here's how much I made in a title fight in Strikeforce, and this is how much I'm gonna make now with the

new Reebok deal," how can you argue that? Because I'm not an idiot. I'm a good businessman. I own a bunch of businesses. And then they're like, "Oh Tim, you're a liar". I'd be like, "Here's my income tax statement, and every one of my forms of income is listed and this fantastic Quickbook spreadsheet, that I'll provide to the public."

You can't call bullshit on me, because everything I say is true, and then you're just going to have pie in your face. I'm kind of a tough one. Maybe he [Dana White] can call me and say, "Hey, we don't appreciate those comments, could you tone it down a little bit?" But you also know that I'm always going to speak my mind. How are you gonna tell a guy that's always gonna say what he thinks, to shut up? 'Cause that's just not how he rolls. I don't know. It's a tough thing when you know you've got me on your roster.

**"The only thing that's stayed true is he's always cheated. I don't know. No surprise there, besides the UFC maybe covering it up."**







**“If I wasn’t contractually obligated to the UFC, would I go fight for Scott Coker? I think I definitely would.”**

**We’ve noticed your Reebok kit still isn’t available on the Reebok website.**

Ohhh. I think they pulled it right as I started talking, and I said it’s super ugly and overpriced, and that I only get 70 cents per every kit that’s sold, or something horrific.

**You only get 70 cents per Reebok Kit sold?**

Well, I’m not sure if I’ve ever sold a single one of my fighter kits, but I’ve definitely never gotten a cheque from them. And we are still looking at the merchandise agreement, trying to just figure out what we would actually get, if we got anything from the sale of a Tim Kennedy fighter kit. So there’s actually a very good chance, let’s say if a million people bought a Tim Kennedy fighter kit t-shirt, I might not get any money at all. If you can you imagine that.

**Are we right in assuming that you would have jumped over to Bellator already if you weren’t obligated by contract to stay in the UFC?**

Oh, I don’t think you’re misinterpreting. Scott’s (Coker) awesome. I love fighting for Scott.

Scott was fun, Scott made exciting fights, Scott made entertaining fights. It wasn’t quite Pride, but it was the best that you could do, without having a bunch of guys hopped up on every single steroid they put their hands on, which is what Strikeforce was.

It was an opportunity for people that like to entertain to really put on and display their skillset. If I wasn’t contractually obligated to the UFC, would I go fight for Scott Coker? I think I definitely would. I love the guy, I love fighting for him, and I kind of miss those days.

**Could the UFC get you to come off your break if you got to welcome Anderson Silva back to the UFC early next year?**

Yes. I would definitely take that fight. That is a fight I would absolutely look forward to taking, and I would put a beating on him in moments. 🍌

# Soa 'The Hulk' Palelei

One of Australia's favourite fighters opens up with his own column in **FIGHT!**

**H**ey, what's up guys? I'd like to officially welcome you to 'Hulk Talk'. Every issue I'll be sharing with the readers of **FIGHT!** my health and fitness tips, motivation secrets, and stories about my life and career as a fighter signed by the worlds largest MMA organisation, the UFC.

Seeing as this is my first issue, I'd like to introduce myself and give you a background on Soa 'The Hulk' Palelei.

I was born in Newcastle, New South Wales, and I became involved with martial arts at an early age to keep out of trouble. However, my lifelong love affair with MMA officially started in 2002 when I made my professional debut and remained unbeaten in my first seven bouts. From there, as they say, the rest is history.

Multiple championships, a winning streak that spans two-and-a-half years – you name it I've done it – travelled to Brazil and lived there, training, competed in the Abu Dhabi BJJ tournaments against the greatest and even fought in Pride.

I have held multiple world titles and am currently contracted to the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC). On Twitter alone, the UFC has 2.7 million followers and has a fan base that is loyal and passionate. Mixed martial arts has been coined many times as "the world's fastest growing sport" and it's an honour to be a part of the development of the sport in Australia.

With a long highlight reel of fighting footage, many have regarded me as one of the most entertaining

competitors that stepped foot in the UFC's Octagon in the heavyweight division.

Complementing my career as a professional fighter, I have also starred in movies alongside Ewan McGregor, in *Son of A Gun*, released last year, and my most recent one, *Zombie Ninjas vs Black Ops*, released in October. I plan on continuing my acting career and continuing to entertain my fans, whether it's in the Octagon or through my movie roles.

Something I'm passionate about is being seen as a motivation for others. Using my social media presence, I want to ensure that I'm always giving back to supporters, sponsors and most importantly, charities. I'm an ambassador for the Make A Wish Foundation and I enjoy every second of being able to help those that need it the most. Having made four wishes come true thus far,


**"Multiple championships, a winning streak that spans two-and-a-half years – you name it, I've done it."**

I'm looking forward to granting more wishes come 2016.

My life motto in just three simple words is, "it goes on". And it's that mentality – that mantra – that I live by.

Thanks, guys. Stay tuned, I promise there will be much

more to come. You can follow me on my social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram simply by looking up Soa 'The Hulk'.

Stay blessed,  
Soa 'The Hulk' Palelei. 



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## MORE TO COME

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